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DETECTIVE

OR, THE DYNAMITE LEAGUE.

BY GEORGE HENRY MORSE.

CHAPTER I.

THE TRAIN-WRECKERS.

ONE wild, tempestuous night in the month of September a scene of startling interest was transpiring at the little village of Brocton, located half-way between New York and Philadelphia, on the main line of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

The hour was ten o'clock, yet, with the exception of an occasional light in the valley below, only the white safety signal of the station relieved the darkness of the scene, together with the illuminated register of the passage of the last train East—"9:23 P. M."

Two persons alone were visible in and around the silent depot—the one a pale, thoughtful-faced young man, who bent over the telegraph instrument in the ticket-office—the other a tall, well-dressed individual who, standing within the shelter of the platform awning, had been watching the falling rain for some time.

The latter finally approached the open window of the office looking out upon the platform, and drawing a match from his pocket, proceeded to

HIS BODY SWAYED TO AND FRO ON HIS PERCH, AND LIFE AND SENSIBILITY SEEMED DESERTING HIM.

strike it, preparatory to igniting the unlighted cigar between his teeth.

At the noise the operator lifted his head quickly, frowned slightly at his own abstracted nervousness, and then resumed his writing at the desk before him, interrupted a moment later by the familiar query of the stranger:

"What time does the next train arrive?"

"For the north?"

"Yes."

"At 11:53."

The other yawned wearily, regarded the operator as his busy fingers flew over the paper before him with a slight token of interest in his cold gray eyes, and then, as if desirous of winning his conversation to alleviate the tedium of a long waiting, paved the way by drawing out a pocket-case and tendering it to the operator with the words:

"Have a cigar."

A slight shade of annoyance crossed the young man's face, and he said almost brusquely:

"I do not care to smoke."

The stranger shrugged his shoulders, and with the careless familiarity of a light-minded man of the world, said:

"Don't be unsocial."

The operator reached out and took one of the still-proffered cigars, as if atoning for his rudeness. He lit it, threw down his pencil, and, leaning back in his chair, resigned himself to listen to the rambling talk of the other as he descanted on the rainy night, the lonely village, the general topics of weather, crops and railway matters.

"I see you are anxious to resume your work," said the man, with a peculiar expression, half veiled, in his eyes. "I'll walk up and down the platform and wait for the train."

The operator resumed his task and the other proceeded along on the platform. As he reached its extreme length he paused, raised his finger to his lips and blew a short, shrill whistle.

A minute later the form of a man emerged from behind a pile of ties at the side of the road. Roughly dressed, he presented a strange contrast to his rather elegantly-attired companion.

"You are all ready?"

"All ready, Torrance, when you are."

"How many are there of you?"

"Six."

"Very well; begin your work. It is now a quarter past ten. In a little over an hour the Philadelphia mail is due. Place the obstructions about the middle of the bridge, and make no mistake in doing the job well."

"Is there no train either way until the mail?"

"None."

The new-comer glanced quickly in the direction of the station. Within the circle of light emanating from the office he saw the form of the operator, his head sunk in his arms on the table.

"You have fixed him?" with an inquiring look at his companion.

"The cigar has," replied the other, with a significant smile.

"Will it keep him quiet until our work is done?"

"Without doubt. Get the clamps and ties over the rail. I will join you in a few minutes."

"And if the operator should awake?"

"It will be of no avail. I shall attend to the wires myself."

They disappeared in the darkness. The light in the office flickering in the winds showed the form of the operator still in its slumbering position.

Powerful indeed must have been the narcotic in the drugged cigar, for the silent figure moved not, even when a rude jar shook the clicking instrument before him. To an expert operator, the inharmonious, confused clicking of the wires would have indicated trouble on the line. The rat-tat-tat broke into a rude jargon; then a spell of silence; and, sharp and definite sounded on the air the quick call of an impatient operator signaling Brocton.

And even amid his clouded sensibility some mechanical intuition of duty's call penetrated the dazed brain, and the operator stirred uneasily; his hands went stupidly to his head; his eyes opening, gazed vacantly around the place.

A heavy dullness oppressed his brain; his fingers were strangely cramped and numb, but with a mighty effort he endeavored to shake off the trance-like lassitude which deadened action and impulse.

His hand, as he discerned trouble and adjusted the ground wire, touched the switch, and his reluctant fingers responded to the call from the New York office:

"Line closed beyond Brocton and Philadelphia. What is the trouble?"

The message awoke his mind to a full realization of the situation, and his dry fevered tongue caught the taint of some bitter taste in his mouth. The episode of the cigar flashed over his mind, and he sprung to the window and gazed out quickly.

The man who had tendered him the cigar was not in sight. He gazed at the clock. It was just a quarter of eleven!

Jumping through the window he glanced at

the wire, following the connection south. His worst suspicions were confirmed. The line had been tampered with, and the wire torn from the nearest pole hung swaying in the wind. His quick glance sweeping the length of the station discerned that the other end had been drawn away as far as his eye could reach.

Why had the connection been broken? Why had he been drugged? A ready theory presented itself to his thoughts, and picking up a lantern he started down the track toward the high bridge spanning the river.

He staggered and fell as a man sprung from behind a switch and dealt him a terrible blow on the head with an iron coupling-pin. The lantern swung high from his grasp as he fell; but its rays illuminating the features of his assailant wrung the words from his lips:

"Dayton! I thought as much."

Then he sunk insensible to the ground, while the other, with but a single glance at his prostrate victim, started toward the bridge.

The rain fell heavily; the wind blew a wild hurricane, but the silent figure lying across the tracks moved not for some moments. Finally a low moan of pain and Willis Marvin, the operator, struggled to his feet and gazed down the road.

Lights were flashing at the bridge; the forms of men were busy piling a huge barricade of rails and wooden ties across the track!

"Great heavens!" he groaned. "They mean to wreck the Philadelphia mail!"

A spring through the window, and his fingers quickly sent a message to the next town north.

"Train-wreckers at work. Am alone, and the wires south cut. Send assistance—quick!"

Then from a drawer in his desk his trembling fingers drew a pocket transmitter in frequent use along the line, and bareheaded, he dashed down the tracks toward the bridge.

Keeping along the track, Marvin saw, with a feeling akin to horror as he realized that the mail train was due in less than half an hour, that the severed wire had been drawn from the posts to a point near the bridge.

"Twenty minutes," he murmured, as his glance rested on the bridge, on the strange figures, and the momentarily increasing pile of obstructions.

To approach nearer the bridge would be folly, so he started down the steep decline to the bed of the river. It was a broad, wandering stream, and high over it was the iron span across which, unless stopped, the Philadelphia mail must soon rush to wreck, ruin and disaster.

In the darkness, unperceived by the workers above, the operator forded the river, swam its deepest portion, struggled up the bank, and, once more on the road-bed, ran a few rods around a curve and sprung for the nearest telegraph-pole.

With an agility born of experience and decision, he ascended the pole, selected the Philadelphia wire, and hanging by the cross-trees, he applied the severed strand to his instrument.

His fingers trembled as he signaled the Junction.

The reply came "O. K."

The clicking instrument conveyed the rapid question:

"Has the Philadelphia mail passed?"

"Yes. Five minutes since!"

The instrument dropped from Marvin's hand; his body swayed to and fro on his dizzy perch, and life and sensibility seemed deserting him.

"Great heavens!" he cried, a sudden reaction thrilling his frame. "I must not delay here. In five minutes more the train will go crashing through yonder bridge unless I save it. A signal! Why did I not think of it before instead of wasting valuable time here?"

Down the pole, and into the bushes at the side of the track, dragging ties, grass, leaves, and chips of wood near it, he piled them over the rails until they were in themselves an obstruction. Then quivering with excitement he sat down to listen.

A shrill whistle in the far distance aroused him. He had waited, ere acting, so as not to warn the men at the bridge. Now he applied a match to the pile. The dry leaves which he had carefully gathered from under bushes and logs blazed, but the wet chips spluttered and flared and did not ignite.

He emptied his pockets of what scraps of paper they contained. A lighted match, a blaze, and the brush and wood burst into a flame!

The iron monster came in view. The danger-signal sounded. The wheels slid along the track, and then, with a jerk, came to a full stop.

Overcome by the excitement, and by the terrible strain upon his nerves, Willis Marvin had fallen back against a pile of ties and sat there, pale and agitated.

The engineer sprung from the cab, and, followed by the conductor and train hands, gathered around him in wonder, while the alarmed passengers hastened from the cars, curious to learn what had occurred.

"What is the matter?" demanded the engineer, gazing from the blazing pile on the track to the pale operator.

The latter pointed to the bridge.

"Go yonder," he said, "and see."

"The bridge has fallen?"

"No."

"What then?"

"Train-wreckers!"

As half the train hands started toward the bridge, Marvin recovered himself sufficiently to give a detailed account of the events of the night to the conductor and the horrified throng about him.

"What can have been the object?" inquired the conductor.

"I cannot comprehend. The express had passed before they began operations, and they surely could not hope to realize much out of the mail."

As he spoke, he was enchained by a pair of dark, searching orbs which, imbued with interest in his words, were fixed intently upon his own.

Their possessor was a young girl, not more than eighteen years of age, whose beautiful face bore as much of startled thought as of loveliness as she approached the operator.

The others had turned to learn what the engineer had discovered at the bridge, as he and his party returned to the train.

Her gloved hand touched Marvin's arm.

"You express wonder at the cause of the attempt to wreck the train?" she said, in a low, steady tone. "I can explain the mystery."

"You?" he cried.

"Yes. The cause of the attempted crime can be told in one word—*myself*!"

CHAPTER II.

A DEEPENING MYSTERY.

THE face of the telegraph operator betrayed the blindest bewilderment.

"I do not understand—" he began.

"Nor can I entirely elucidate the mystery," interrupted the young lady. "You have saved my life, sought, I am assured, by the train-wreckers. I owe you gratitude. I owe you confidence, and yet—"

She paused, a troubled look in her face, an appealing expression in her glance fixed upon her companion.

"You may trust in me," he said; "but I think you mistake the motive of these men. It may be fancy, but, if so, that fancy bears a singular coincidence, for I believe that this night's work was directed against myself solely."

It was the woman's turn to express surprise. But ere she could speak the conductor's voice was heard addressing the passengers:

"We will be delayed here an hour or more."

Two iron clamps have been adjusted to the track, and we will have to send for mechanical aid to remove them."

"I must go to the station," said Marvin, to his companion, abruptly recalled to his duty by the conductor's words.

"May I accompany you?"

There was neither boldness nor coquetry in the appeal. Only the earnest voice of a woman bent upon following out some definite purpose formed in her mind.

"Certainly, if you choose."

He assisted her over the ties when the railroad bridge was reached and past the train hands, who were endeavoring to find some clew to the whereabouts of the perpetrators of the outrage, who had disappeared.

The office once reached, he handed his companion to a chair. As she sat fully revealed to him in form and feature, the operator could but observe that she possessed an air of high breeding, that her apparel was rich, her face exquisitely beautiful. She betrayed a strange interest in attributing the events of the night to her enemies.

"You have taken the words of explanation from my lips," said the woman, finally, "by a most startling statement. Tell me what you know of this affair, and perhaps what I have to divulge will be supplementary and important."

"It would be a long story, and to you a wearying one. I believe the attempted crime to have been prompted by men anxious to put me out of the way," replied Marvin.

"To kill you?"

"No, but to hound me down, to drive me from their trail, to bring the obloquy of neglect upon my name, and secure my discharge from employment."

The eyes of the young girl betrayed the most intense interest.

"Why should they do this?"

"I do not know."

It was her turn to regard him as laboring under some delusion.

"When I say I do not know," continued the young man, "I mean that the operations and motives of my enemies are obscured in part. You have read of men hunted down from reasons of revenge or other powerful motives; such a person I have reason to believe myself to be; a victim to the plots of a league of criminals, who first kidnapped and, for all I know, killed my father, and then, when I discovered one of their number and sought to trace them down, systematically drove me from every position I occupied, from a desk in the counting-room, from a position on the metropolitan detective

force, which I secured to follow them more closely. To-night I verily believe their iniquity culminated in drugging me, in attempting to cause a frightful disaster to be laid at my door. All I know is that mystery surrounds my father's disappearance, and I also know but one member of the band which has sought to ruin my family and myself. As effectually as if swallowed up by the earth, my father, Robert Marvin, lawyer of Nassau street, New York city, left his office one afternoon six months since, and was lost to the sight of men. The most persistent search has failed to disclose a single trace of him, the offer of liberal rewards, the earnest efforts of private detectives and myself have resulted in coming to a blank wall on which seems written the too frequent legend of metropolitan experience; 'Mysteriously disappeared.'

"Six months since," murmured the girl, leaning forward, her eyes fixed upon the other.

"Yes."

"May he not have—"

"I know what you would say," interrupted Marvin. "Suicide—accident. No; he was decoyed away I am satisfied, because he held the confidence and secrets of a client."

"A client?" the woman's lips queried, her eyes dilating wildly as she repeated his words. "You have traced the mystery thus far. Can you tell me that client's name?"

"Yes. It was Gerald Thorndyke."

"Merciful heavens! My father!"

The operator fell back in his chair as if an electric shock had fixed him there. Each heart in a wild tempest, trembling on the brink of a discovery so strangely brought to them by a singular meeting, they sat, one awaiting the words of the other.

"Your father!" cried the operator, breaking the silence.

"Yes, Gerald Thorndyke was my father. Around him, around the destinies of all who knew or befriended him, has been woven so deadly a web of events that a curse seems to have followed and haunted that friendship."

Her face sunk upon her hand. The operator regarded her in wondering silence for some time. At last she lifted her eyes to his, more calm, her face pale but resolute.

"Will you proceed?" she said.

He bowed quietly and continued:

"How I know this, how I have ascertained that my father was the victim of a vile plot, I discovered from a letter."

"A letter?"

"Yes. Six months since a street gamin picked up in Barclay street an envelope directed to me. It had been thrown there from some passing vehicle in some inexplicable manner, and was dirt-begrimed and torn. But the little arab brought the letter to the direction it bore. That letter was written in my father's hand. Hastily scrawled, it told me that he was in the power of a band of men, whose motives, crime and gain, had been called into requisition in a case where he was concerned. He informed me that, watched by them, he had sought in vain to communicate with me, and that he had no hopes that even this letter would reach me. The motives of his arrest were the secrets he possessed of Gerald Thorndyke, a client just returned from Europe. The letter was interrupted in its conclusion hastily, for it wound up abruptly with the statement that his captors were about to remove him to another place, and if he refused to divulge an important secret had threatened to kill him. 'I will be true to the interests of Gerald Thorndyke,' he concluded. 'Trace down my enemies; they are Reuben Dayton—'

"And there the letter ended?"

"There it ended."

"And this man Dayton?"

"Is the man I met to-night. Is the man I have met once before, a former servant of my father's family."

"And your position here?"

"Was taken to gain temporary covert from these men. I was pursued, threatened, even shot at several times. A false charge caused my removal from the detective force. I came here for rest, to think, and then to search for these men, concerning whom I only know four facts: That Gerald Thorndyke's secrets have cost my father his liberty, perhaps his life; that Reuben Dayton is a member of the band; that these men are bound to hunt me down as they did my father; and the mysterious sign of this organization."

"The sign!" cried the young girl, her face turning white and agitated.

"Yes, the mystic symbol impressed upon the arm of Dayton, perhaps on the arm of each member of the order. Shall I show it to you?" and he seized a pencil to outline the symbol upon the paper on the desk.

The woman waved her hand with a gesture of horror.

"No, no," she cried. "I know it only too well—the red-stained broken blade, the name of the order it represents, the Dynamite League."

"The Dynamite League," repeated the operator, in awed tones, impressed, he knew not why, by the singular name.

"Yes, it is the Dynamite League which has robbed both of us of a father; it is this confederation of crime which, hiding the real actor, is

working out a terrible record to remove from its path the obstacles to that hidden person's success. But it is fate which has brought us together, a fate the first operations of which are harbingers of success and hope."

She spoke with the inspiration of faith and enthusiasm. Her eyes glittered brightly, her face flushed, her every gesture imbued with energy and indomitable perseverance.

"Let me relate my story," she continued, more calmly. "Let me divulge to you that which will make mystery plain, and prove to you that your meeting with Reuben Dayton to-night was but a coincidence, and that I, and not you, was the cause of this last desperate act of these men. Then, whether we join issues or not, you will know what you have to fear, who are the foes with whom you have to deal."

"I am Constance Thorndyke, daughter of Gerald Thorndyke, a wealthy, retired banker of New York, for two years a resident of Italy, where he went to recover failing health. Before leaving America he converted the bulk of his fortune into money, and left only such property as he had possessed for a long time, among which was the homestead on Irving Place, in the charge of a true friend and an attorney, a Mr. Marvin."

"My father," murmured the operator.

The girl bowed assent, and continued:

"At Palermo, about a year since, my father one day packed up his effects very suddenly and announced to me that he was about to return to America. I knew how powerful were his caprices, and I offered no objection, he no explanation. But to my surprise, when I arose the next morning, he had gone alone. He had left a note stating that business of the utmost importance had called him to New York, and that he had found the haste necessary on the voyage would make it inconvenient to himself, and unpleasant to me to accompany him, and leaving me a check for a large amount of money, had gone. I was very much alarmed, but as I received letters at Paris and Liverpool from him, I resigned myself to his decision. Then a lapse of silence, and I was utterly prostrated six months since when I received from New York a brief, formal letter, from a distant relative, to the effect that my father had died from ship fever at his residence in that city, leaving me all his personal effects and bank account at Palermo, and the rest to the writer. The name signed was that of a man I loathed and detested at the time, whom I have since learned to regard as my father's murderer, and my most implacable enemy, Adrian Revere."

The woman paused and glanced inquiringly at the operator, as the latter started violently with an exclamation of surprise.

"You know this man?" she asked.

"Yes, but only incidentally. I traced Dayton to his home one night."

"When I recalled that, in leaving, my father had drawn his bank account, except sufficient to meet the check left with me, that he had taken with him the steel casket containing the valuables representing his entire fortune, and when I thought of Adrian Revere, I knew that foul play had been at work. An examination of some private papers left behind confirmed my suspicions. This man Revere had once been a suitor for my hand. I had rejected him, for he had the reputation, in connection with a band of loose adventurers, of being concerned in numerous swindling schemes, in the various capitals of Europe. He had left in dissatisfaction and vengeful, but, I ascertained, had not abandoned his determination to secure my fortune. Among the letters I found several from him. For years my father's mind, weakened by old age, had entertained a vain delusion—the transmutation of metals."

"I found that Revere, with ready wit, playing on this susceptible chord, had induced my unsuspecting parent to come to Paris, meeting him there and accompanying him to New York, where, he avowed, he had found a chemist who could change the baser metals to gold. In three months, after unusual delays from storm and disaster, I reached New York to find Revere in possession of the family mansion, installed as heir to my father's estates."

A whistle interrupted the girl's story. She started, as she understood from her companion's face that it was the engine ready to continue its journey.

The other glanced at the clock, saw that it was after midnight, and taking up a pen, began to write rapidly. His companion discerned from his manner that he was also listening to her.

"I will be brief," she continued. "I boldly charged Revere with the death of my father, and showed him what I knew of his plot. In return, he was insolent, suave, threatening by turns. He denied any foul play, and produced the certificate of my father's death from natural causes, the will leaving him heir. He denied any knowledge of the steel casket, and pretended to believe that my father had left it with me. Then he offered me marriage, and I indignantly left the house."

"Since then, day and night I have been followed, shadowed whenever I sought to watch him, balked when I sought friendly advice. His

emissaries have followed me. Mysterious warnings, attempts on my life, offers of bribes and threats to induce me to leave America have assailed me, until I have had it slowly developed to me that back of Revere stands a powerful ally composed of his European adventurers, desperate assassins and criminals—the Dynamite League with its broken dagger as an emblem, influence and secrecy as its helpers. I went to Philadelphia to evade them, at last determined to return to New York and seek police aid. Secure as is this man's position, he must be unmasked, and I sought to effect it. Shadowed in Philadelphia, some emissary has informed the League of my movements. The result you have seen—the attempted wreck of the train."

The train itself drew up in front of the station at that moment, and a stranger entered the office and took his place at the instrument.

"My assistant," explained Marvin as he approached the new-comer and handed him the letter he had written.

Miss Thorndyke had arisen.

"You will proceed with the train?" asked Marvin.

"Yes, I must; and you?"

"I will accompany you."

"You will abandon your position here?" she said.

"I have done so already in the letter I handed my assistant. To-night's developments have decided my course. My father suffered for his adherence to your father's interests. If Gerald Thorndyke possessed sufficient claim on him to induce him to sacrifice liberty and life, the son will not be remiss in his fidelity to the daughter. I shall accompany you to New York. I shall watch and protect you. With issues identical, hand in hand we will work out this dark mystery or die together victims to the operations of the Dynamite League!"

CHAPTER III.

IN PERIL.

WITHIN a sumptuously-furnished apartment of the Thorndyke mansion, in Irving Place, the evening of the second day after the occurrence of the outrage at Brocton, sat Adrian Revere.

Schemer was indelibly stamped upon the man's face, craftiness, caution, avarice, plainly spoke in the restless bright eyes. There was another occupant of the apartment, a man roughly dressed, and with coarse, unshaven face, but his insolent familiarity with the other, his easy attitude of indolence in the capacious arm-chair from the velvet depths of which he faced his host, told that however widely separated their positions socially, a bond of equality reduced the more intelligent of the two to the grade of the other when together and alone.

"Then the train business was a failure?" inquired Revere, his face betokening a shade of annoyance at the careless air of the other.

"Yes, that cursed operator outwitted us. If we had known that he and our mysterious trailer in the past were one and the same, I would have anticipated my careless blow with a knife-thrust."

"Torrance did not know him then?"

"No."

"Where is he now?"

"In the city."

Revere started violently.

"He is under surveillance?"

"Yes."

"And the girl?"

"She is with him. Between you and I, Revere, the case is working to our disadvantage. The girl suspects the truth, and with what Marvin knows, they may make us trouble."

"You think they connect the League's operations with myself?"

Dayton laughed, derisively.

"Surely you did not imagine they would fail to do so?" he said.

Revere was silently reflective for a few moments.

"See here, Dayton," he said, finally, "when I disbanded the old league, it was agreed that the money I gave would leave me free to abandon the old life once for all."

"That is true."

"Therefore I must not be brought in contact with them sufficient to excite suspicion."

"It was your own seeking, this using our influence to carry out your schemes."

"I know that, and I am willing to pay for it. Your course is plain enough—the girl and this troublesome fellow, Marvin, who has constituted himself a detective—get rid of them and I am free of all obstacles in the Thorndyke matter."

"Murder is not so easy in open daylight, when the victim is on the watch," replied Dayton.

"Then use science. With the means at your command of scientific killing that Mazini can suggest, these people should be but little trouble to remove from your path."

"And the money?"

Revere turned angrily upon the other.

"It's always money," he said. "Let Torrance carry out the contract and wrest Robert Marvin's secret from him regarding the casket, and you shall all be rich."

A quick glance as quickly veiled broke from the eyes of Dayton; accompanying it, however,

was a dissatisfied air, as he arose to leave the place.

"I have all the risky work to do and Torrance the biggest share of the money," he remarked, complainingly.

"You can settle these difficulties with Torrance," replied Revere, carelessly. "The case is clear; so much money for so much work."

Dayton left the room and the house a minute later. He walked rapidly from the place, his face thoughtful, his manner abstracted.

Once he stopped. A sudden thought seemed to stir his mind to quickened action, and as he took a piece of paper and perused it, his face lit up with an excited smile.

"If I was only sure," he murmured—"if I could only trust some one to help me at the work! Twenty-two feet of water and near the shore. I'll do the League's work in this case and wait patiently, but when I get the casket, it will be good-by to the old life, even if Revere does hold my secrets and threatens the penitentiary."

He resumed his walk, and came, finally, to a halt at a three-story frame tenement-house in Eighth avenue. Ascending the dark staircase, he came to a stop at a door; opening which he entered a room and advanced to the window.

It opened on a court around which at lighted and unlighted windows the schemer gazed with considerable curiosity. He seated himself finally at the window and fixed his eyes on a room directly across the court, within which, at a table, sat the object of his espionage.

It was Willis Marvin, his grave, thoughtful face shaded by the lamplight, his eyes fixed upon a paper before him. It was a singular document, and he might well be startled at its hidden import, for above a rudely scrawled broken dagger were the words: "Beware!—the last warning of the Dynamite League."

He thrust the paper aside, and, leaning back in his chair, meditated profoundly, all unconscious of the watchful eyes across the court—ignorant of the fact that in Dayton's mind was forming a plot to end his career forever. With Constance Thorndyke inspiring, hourly, a devoted love within his heart—in apparent safety—himself in the field fairly pitted against his enemies—he was at a loss how to move to reveal the mystery of the League, which pursued him with mysterious warnings;—how to begin to discern the fate of his father.

Shadowing the main mover in the plot, Adrian Revere—himself shadowed in turn—he had despaired of gaining aught against the wily schemer, strongly intrenched legally in a false position. The long trail had begun most inauspiciously, for he was in the dark as to the number and identity of his foes, while he felt assured those enemies shadowed him, pursued him at every turn.

Even at that moment worse than threats awaited him. Even as the light revealed his form, distinctly, to the silent watcher across the court, that enemy, with vengeful purpose, poised carefully in his hand a glass globe, his own face pale at the desperation of the move, his hand trembling as he flung it across the narrow space intervening between the two windows.

Marvin started and involuntarily drew back as a dark object passed between the light and himself and fell directly in his lap. A white horror crossed his face as he seized the glass globe and examined it. Well might he shudder, as he recognized it—as he realized that had it fallen on the floor or on any other hard substance, his death would have been certain.

It was a dynamite shell!

Civilized warfare held many dangerous projectiles but none more fatal than this. Fascinated, appalled, he stood viewing the deadly explosive, and then suddenly reflecting that he exposed himself to a second assault he placed it on the table, blew out the lamp, and hastening to the window gazed out in search of the unseen enemy who had threatened his life.

He drew back as a sharp twanging sound broke the silence of the place, but not before he had observed something drop from a window opposite to the tile-paved court below. The very air was freighted with menace, and as a bullet went clear through his coat-sleeve, and crashed into the wall of the apartment, he knew that the same enemy who had projected the shell had attempted his life a second time.

The air-pistol! It could be no other weapon which could so silently and surely speed a bullet on its deadly errand. What could he hope to do against foes who did not hesitate to employ weapons at variance with the integrity of every civilized nation? But his escape gave him courage, and as he watched the window from which Dayton's arm had accidentally brushed a book into the court below, he decided that he had located the covert of his invisible foe.

Should he venture thither? Yes; boldness alone would avail him; so, silently, he stole from the room, gained the street, and entered the hallway of the building across the court. He traversed the dark corridors until, reaching the third floor, he began estimating the probable location of the room where his would-be assassin was hidden.

An open doorway greeted him as, with noiseless steps, he approached the spot where he be-

lieved his enemy was. Straining his vision against the light in the court and the window-frame, he saw a man, a weapon in his hand, dimly outlined, leaning out of the window, his gaze apparently fixed intently on the window of his own room.

"Drop your pistol!"

So sudden was the command that the startled Dayton turned quickly, his fingers relaxing their hold on the weapon he had. The cold muzzle of a pistol was pressed close to his forehead—a strong, sinewy hand clutched his throat in an iron grip.

"Reuben Dayton!" spoke the voice. "Ah, even in the dark I can see your murderous face. Assassin, coward, who dare not meet your victims in open warfare, I could kill you where you are," and, returning his revolver to his pocket, Willis caught his enemy with both hands, held him in a powerful grasp, shaking him roughly, and giving expression in fierce denunciation to his anger and hate.

Fatal movement—the lowering of the revolver! for the other, seeing himself on equal grounds with his foe, made a quick move and grappled with his opponent.

Both fought desperately, but in the terrible struggle the body of Dayton was flung sheer over the window ledge.

"At my mercy, villain!" cried Marvin. "What is to prevent me from dropping you to the pavement below, a crushed, mangled mass?"

"You dare not!"

The cold defiance in the face of death startled the Telegraph Detective.

"You defy me?" he cried. "A single respite, one chance to gain time for your coward soul! Tell me where your accomplices are!"

"I refuse."

Hanging over the dizzy height, inevitable death below, the desperado was mute. His wrists held by the detective, completely at the caprice of his impulse, the villain yet defied his foe.

"Then you shall die!" cried Marvin, hoarsely. "You have made me a desperate man, and you, at least, shall atone for your crimes."

"Hold!"

He tightened his grasp on the sliding wrists. His hot breath came in gasps, his eyes flashed hatred and rage upon his foe.

"If you kill me," uttered Dayton, solemnly, "the secret of your father's fate will never be known."

"Wretch, you dare traffic on your knowledge of the victim of your crimes?"

"I dare anything to save my life," replied Dayton. "Keep me up, and I swear to tell you the truth."

As if disdainful of peril from the man's treachery, Marvin lifted him into the room.

"Listen to me, Dayton," he said, warningly, as he drew his revolver with one hand and with the other retained a firm grasp on the arm of his foe; "you will obey me implicitly or die. My revolver is at your head. Move to where the lamp is and light it."

In the darkness Dayton groped around the apartment. He secured a match, lit it, and then the lamp.

Backing toward the window, the revolver leveled at Dayton's breast, Marvin closed it, shut and locked the door and pointed to a chair.

Dayton sunk into the seat, a sullen scowl on his face as he arranged his disordered apparel.

"I have but few words to say to you," continued Marvin. "I will not be trifled with, and the law will hold me guiltless. You bargained for your worthless life. I will give you my terms—total obedience to my commands, truthful replies to my questions."

Dayton glanced quickly about the apartment. Near the window lay the air-pistol; nearer than that no object of assault; while his opponent held his revolver, ready cocked, by his side.

"I wish to know of your connection with the Dynamite League. I wish to know your part in the disappearance of my father."

Dayton started. His lips moved, but he repressed the words. Instead, he assumed a defiant air, as he answered:

"You grant me my life if I answer your questions? Do you know how much that life would be worth after betraying the secrets of the organization to which I belong?"

"I neither know nor care."

"Then you may as well end this interview," replied Dayton, recklessly. "If I am to place myself at your mercy or theirs I may as well choose the easiest fate."

"You mean—"

The desperado pointed to the revolver at Marvin's side. It was raised at the gesture.

"Hold!" cried Dayton. "I offer a compromise. You desire to learn your father's fate and the mystery of his connection with the Dynamite League. I agree to tell you, but not now—not until I have disposed of another branch of the case and have a chance to get out of the way of the men you ask me to betray."

Was he talking to gain time? Was he worthy of being trusted? The self-constituted avenger of a father's wrongs was suspicious, but said, coldly:

"Proceed."

"I will. I am willing, when the proper time

comes, to tell you all, for I am tired of this life of peril, and seek only safety and money. You can aid me to secure both. In return, I will tell you how this League, formed of men, the outcasts of Europe, who have been engaged in many a scheme of imperial murder, hired assassins and criminals, comes to be concerned in the Thorndyke Mystery, at the beck and call of Adrian Revere, and of your father's mysterious connection with Gerald Thorndyke; but I must reserve that for the moment, when, a fortune in my hand to secure flight, you allow me to depart, after revealing to you these secrets."

A curious light came into Marvin's eye.

"You talk in enigmas," he said.

"Then I will be plain. Except through me you can never learn your father's fate, for, single-handed, you can never penetrate the secrets of the Dynamite League. Your father's interests and those of Gerald Thorndyke are closely linked together; those of yourself and Constance Thorndyke fully as much so. A fortune is the motive of all this scheming—the casket of jewels left by Gerald Thorndyke."

"Are they not possessed by Adrian Revere?"

"No."

Marvin gave a start of surprise.

"Then he spoke truly when he told Miss Thorndyke that he believed her to have them?"

"No, he knew better. He knew that one man alone knew where Thorndyke had secreted them—at least he thought so."

"And that man?"

"Was your father, Robert Marvin."

"Then this is the secret of his disappearance?"

"Yes."

"And because he would not reveal his secret they have murdered him?"

"No; he is still alive."

"Thank Heaven!" cried Marvin, fervently.

"I will be honest with you," continued Dayton, with apparent sincerity, "on one condition: If I agree to reveal all to you—if I agree, within twenty-four hours, to turn over to you the missing jewels, will you promise that I shall go, unmolested, whither I will—that you will not use the information I give you until I shall have had time to leave the city?"

"Yes; I promise."

"One more condition: Will you give me, from the casket, half of its contents?"

Marvin started. Surely no man was ever confronted with so singular a proposition.

"You forget," he said, "that the jewels are not mine to bestow."

The face of the other fell, his lips closed tightly.

"Then I am mute," he said. "Do with me as you will."

The two men measured each other with penetrating glances. Marvin saw that his companion was in earnest.

"You know where these jewels are, you pretend?"

"I do not pretend—I know."

"Then my father is not the only man who knows?"

"No. I also know; I saw them planted. I touched them a week since."

Marvin looked puzzled.

"Listen to me," he said. "I dare not trust you, for you are a man unworthy of confidence, but I will agree to one condition."

"And that is—"

"That you precede me to the street, and that there I secure a messenger, and send your proposition in writing to the legal owner of this treasure."

"Constance Thorndyke?"

"Yes."

"I agree."

Marvin drew from his pocket a memorandum-book, hastily scrawled a note, and tearing it from the book, folded and addressed it.

"I am ready," he said.

"I must read the note," declared Dayton.

"Why?"

"Because I have no reason to trust you. How do I know but that it requests Miss Thorndyke to send for police aid?"

Marvin handed him the note, which Dayton perused eagerly. He returned it, with a satisfied look, as he read the simple sentence:

"If I can unravel all the mystery of your father's death by sacrificing half the contents of the jewel-casket, shall I do so?"

Then his signature.

The desperado arose and preceded Marvin down the stairs to the street.

They paused on the door-step. A boy was passing by, and Marvin handed him the note and offered him a dollar to convey it to its address, and return with a reply.

It came, within half an hour.

"What does she say?" demanded Dayton, eagerly.

"Miss Thorndyke agrees."

The other smiled, a satisfied gleam on his face.

"Come," he ordered, simply.

Marvin followed, his hand on the revolver in his pocket, still suspicious of his treacherous enemy. Once, when he passed two men, and one of them starting as he saw Dayton, revealed a face resembling that of Torrance—the man who had given him the drugged cigar at the station at Brocton—the detective watched closely to

see if any signal passed between him and his prisoner. Dayton, however, had apparently not seen the man.

He bestowed no further care on the stranger, but kept close to Dayton's side. Had he turned, however, he would have noticed the two men shadowing them in the distance.

Dayton kept on at a rapid pace until they reached a point on the wharves near a river street. By the side of a storehouse he paused.

"I have a boat near yonder pile of timbers," he said. "You will have to help me launch it."

Marvin drew back suspiciously, but a minute later followed Dayton boldly.

"This treasure," he began, as they lifted a small boat into the water.

"Is some distance from here," was Dayton's reply.

In the darkness and gloom of the night the two started on their singular mission—a mission holding more of loss than gain—less of gold and jewels than of death and disaster.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TREASURE CASKET.

ONLY the occasional whistle of some steamer, or the signal-bell of passing ferry-boats, broke the silence of the scene as the small yawl-boat sped down the river, propelled by two oars in the hands of Dayton.

Neither Marvin nor his companion spoke a word until they had passed a point opposite the Battery and emerged into the more open water.

It was Marvin who first broke the oppressive silence.

"Am I to understand that the treasure is secreted on some island?" he asked.

"No! See here," continued Dayton, as if inspired with sudden confidence: "I've started in to cut loose from the old band, and I believe you'll treat me fair and square. The treasure is hidden near the Narrows, in deep water."

"In the water?" repeated Willis, incredulously.

"Yes; I'll tell you the whole story. Adrian Revere was the leader of a lot of adventurers in Europe—gamblers and worse—men who have been concerned in many a Nihilistic scheme of crime and gain. Badly broken up by a raid on a gambling-den in Paris, the greater portion of us returned to America. It was at this time that Revere sprung his scheme of entrapping his rich relative, Gerald Thorndyke, with a specious game of fraud. He induced Thorndyke to return to America. On the way he was drugged and kept in Revere's cabin. But he had no suspicion that Torrance, myself and other emissaries were on the vessel only to carry out a desperate plan. We reached New York at night. I remember we were nearing the city. About midnight, when I was seated on the deck, I saw a white-robed form steal up the cabin-stairway and drop an iron object over the side of the vessel."

"The treasure-casket?"

"I could swear to it. The man I believe to have been Gerald Thorndyke. Suspicious of Revere, half-dazed by drugs, he had removed the treasure-chest from his trunk and trusted it to the waters of the river sooner than to the hands of the man he began to suspect. I saw it dropped. I remember the place by the range of lights on the shore, close at hand, and, two weeks since, while Revere and his friends were on a false trail, I visited the spot."

"And found it?"

"No; but I touched it with the sounding-line. Oh, I couldn't be mistaken. It's there, in thirty feet of water—a cool million in gold and jewels, and half for me—half for me!"

He accelerated the speed of the boat under the excitement of avarice and expectation.

"I fail to understand how my father knew of this treasure," declared Marvin.

"I don't know that he did. I only know that Revere supposed the casket to be in Thorndyke's trunk up to the day of his death. When the vessel arrived at its wharf, a carriage conveyed Thorndyke to his home. By this time ship-fever, and the tender care of Revere, had almost destroyed what little mind he had left. Revere thought it unnecessary to watch him after he had induced him to will all his real estate to him. Whenever he spoke of the casket, however, the old man's lips were mute, and Revere, believing it to be in his trunk, did not press the matter, knowing that his death, which must soon occur, would place the treasure-chest at his disposal. One day, when he was gone, your father managed to see Thorndyke. When Revere returned, he heard of the interview and was terribly alarmed, and that night, when Gerald Thorndyke died, and a search of the trunk revealed the casket gone, he believed that your father and his victim had outwitted him. The result was that your father was kidnapped. Revere believed he knew where the casket was, but Robert Marvin refused to speak a single word concerning his client's secrets, even under threats of death. I kept my own counsel. While Revere believed the casket to have been hidden by your father, I realized what I knew—I remembered what I

had seen—the casket sunk in the river. Thorndyke had outwitted his enemies, but he had not outwitted me!"

Confident in his belief, the face of the speaker was eager, triumphant. In the mists which hung over the water objects were dimly seen as they passed various points familiar to Marvin. At last, however, he saw distinctly the shingly beach of Staten Island.

Dayton had stayed the boat's course and allowed it to drift shoreward.

"Is this the place?" inquired Marvin.

"Yes. The exact spot. I must locate by certain familiar bearings and land leads."

Marvin became intensely interested in the search, forgetting his suspicions, and following with all the zest of an awakened curiosity the movements of his companion.

He saw him walk up and down the beach, marking off imaginary lines and angles with his eye, and then proceeded to his side, as in the imperfect light of the night, he thought he discerned Dayton make a motion to him.

"Did you signal me?"

"Yes."

"Are you ready?"

"All ready. Drag the boat to this rock I have my foot on. It's about two hundred feet to the east."

He sprang into the boat as Marvin brought it to the spot. Seizing the oars he directed the yawl in a straight line from the shore.

Both were deeply engrossed in the exciting task, and neither noticed a second boat moored further up the beach. It contained two men—the men whom Marvin had noticed near the wharf in New York city. They had shadowed the fortune-hunters to the wharf—they had followed them by boat—had landed, and now stood gazing out at the yawl slowly leaving the shore.

The man who resembled the person who had proffered the drugged cigar at Brocton turned to his companion, a look of the blankest amazement in his face:

"What does it mean?" he demanded.

The other shook his head perplexedly.

"Dash me if I know. First I thought that Dayton was playing us false into this fellow's hands; then I supposed he was leading him into a trap; but their mysterious movements puzzle me."

"There can be no doubt about his treachery. Did I not overhear him deliberately refer to our secrets. Ha! I see it all! Fool, fool! He has rushed to his own doom!"

"What do you mean?" demanded the other, curiously.

"Dayton has grown too cunning for his years, but he will overreach himself this time, as sure as fate. You remember we brought a memento of our European career back with us. There's a plant in the channel, yonder, but I fancy its contents will rather surprise Dayton. Hist! Let me watch them!"

Dayton had kept the boat straight out from the shore. Marvin held a long line over the stern, divided into ten-foot lengths by nails.

"One hundred—one fifty—one ninety—two hundred!" he called out, under Dayton's direction.

The oars brought the boat to a full stop.

"That's the length," cried Dayton, excitedly. "Now, then, take my place, and hold the boat steady where she is."

They exchanged places, Marvin at the oars, Dayton at the stern, with a package taken from the bottom of the boat.

Unrolled rapidly it revealed a rope with grappling-hooks. He cast it over the side of the boat, his eyes sparkling like two diamonds in the darkness.

The unsteady wavering motion of the little craft caused him to be some time ere an exclamation of triumph announced his success.

"You have got it?" inquired Marvin, aloud, as much excited as his companion.

"Yes. Pull slowly to the shore."

"Can you not lift it?"

"No; we must drag it."

"It cannot be the casket," decided Marvin.

"It would not be so heavy."

"To the shore!" was Dayton's only response, his voice trembling with excitement.

He never lifted his eyes from the water—never relaxed his grasp upon the grapnel-rope as he stepped from the boat when the beach was gained. Marvin breathlessly watched him as he began to draw in the line, and at last a dark, oblong object was revealed to his view, and dragging it upon the sharply shelving beach, Dayton fairly danced with delight as he moved his hands over the mud-begrimed, rust-flaked surface.

"It is ours!" he cried, half-frantic in his glee.

"All ours! See the iron bands—the top cap!"

"You will not open it here?" Marvin asked.

The other glanced up, suspiciously.

"You retract your bargain?" he cried.

"No; only we may be watched."

Dayton had sped to the boat and returned with a hatchet.

"We will open it here," he declared. "No fear of interruption at this early hour of the morning."

"Bring me a large stone to rest the casket on," he said, a minute later. "I will force it

with the hatchet. The treasure—the treasure half mine—half mine!" he muttered, hoarsely.

A sardonic laugh swept echoless along the beach. Neither noticed it. Marvin started to find a stone as directed by Dayton. Even as he proceeded, he could hear his impatient companion endeavoring to break open the obdurate iron casket.

He had stooped over to pick up a rock of the required size, when, looking up, he started as from behind a clump of bushes, the glittering barrel of a revolver stared him in the face. It raised as he arose; its possessor, Torrance, faced him!

"One word and I fire. Stand where you are! You have escaped Dayton; you will not escape us."

Resistance or flight was useless. He recognized his opponent, and as his companion arose Marvin stood silent.

"Do you hear him?" cried Torrance to his companion, as the click-click of the hatchet sounded on the air. "Treasures! Ha-ha! He will soon know—he will soon know!"

Unaccountably mystified, Marvin looked at Torrance.

"You know what the casket contains?" he was impelled to ask.

"Know?" replied Torrance, with a scornful laugh; "I should say so! It contains that which, if accidentally scraped by the keel of some passing steamer, would have caused death to every one on board!"

A wild light sprung into Marvin's eyes.

"Then it is not the treasure casket?"

"No! It is—"

The word was drowned in the deafening roar of a terrible noise, as a louder knock of Dayton's hatchet was succeeded by a horrible, reverberating explosion. A million fragments seemed to fill the air. A blinding flash of light revealed flying bits of iron and mangled remains of a dismembered human body, and Marvin shuddered with a sickening realization of the disaster Dayton's mistake had caused.

A piece of flying iron struck Torrance's companion, and he fell as if shot. Horrified, confused, Marvin gave one glance at Torrance. He saw in his face the calmness of recklessness, the sardonic smile of a man gloating over treachery's reward—himself at his mercy, when the excitement of the disaster had subsided.

The boat Dayton had employed had been blown far into the water by the concussion. One glance at the spot where Dayton had met his awful fate, a second at the deep waters of the Narrows, and then with a spring Marvin dashed from Torrance's side, his pale lips murmuring in horrified accents the single word:

"Dynamite!"

A shot whizzed by his head as he struck out from land, but he heeded it not. The explosion—the catastrophe to Dayton—the realization that, in his death, had disappeared all hopes of a ready solution of the Thorndyke Mystery, nerved Marvin to superhuman efforts; he battled the current and the waves, bent only on escaping from the scene of the frightful tragedy and from the power and influence of these fiends of the Dynamite League.

CHAPTER V.

TRACKED DOWN.

TWO hours after the explosion of the dynamite tube opposite Long Island, Marvin, wet, wearied, exhausted, and the picture of disappointment and despair, tottered up the stairs leading to his room in the building on Eighth avenue, and flinging himself into a chair, gave himself over to the abandon of fatigue.

The early morning light dimly illuminating the apartment revealed the shell thrown by Dayton, the warning of the League, on the table before him. A glance from the window recalled the startling episodes of the previous night. In whichever direction thought turned, it met one overpowering element influencing his motives, impulses and acts—the operations of the Dynamite League.

Amid the apathy of apparent defeat in his plans, Marvin bitterly wondered if it would not have been better had he never entered upon the perilous task he had undertaken. Too well already he knew the formidable confederation he had to combat, too fully he realized that in the death of Dayton was buried the secret of his father's persecution—were sealed the lips which might have closed the case rapidly and in his favor, as well as in that of the woman he had learned to love.

But despair with his restless nature was a transient emotion. Even though hopeless, his active mind compelled him to resume the trail. A score of men faced him, plot for plot, move for move, and they, unknown to him, perhaps even at that moment were watching him, dogging his every step. His father's fate warned him that his temerity might cost him dear; the terrible mistake of Dayton showed that the means employed by the League in its warfare against its enemies were sudden, deadly, obliterative.

But filial duty—a newly-aroused love—all the motives of his life centered around the mystery he had sought to elucidate. To remain idle

while a father suffered, while a villain was dominant in schemes of peril and death to honest men, would be criminal. He could struggle even if he failed, and the same kind fate which had guided his course on the river—which had enabled him to gain land, he scarcely knew how, would direct him safely through the dangers with which a conflict with Torrance and his accomplice would inevitably surround him.

An hour's sleep after donning dry garments, and then as he meditated for a moment silently and left the apartment, his closed lips and resolute face spoke more plainly than words: "I have decided on my course and I will follow it to the end."

The constantly increasing tide of humanity hurrying along the crowded thoroughfare to work, inspired his mind with the excitement of action. Surrounded by men, in view of the provision made for man's protection, he wondered if his mind had not magnified the influence and daring of the men opposed to him. At all events, as he was ushered into the parlor of the house where Constance Thorndyke had taken temporary refuge, his thoughts looking more to the future, less to the past, took hope, and the appearance of Constance inspired him with new resolves to conquer in the task he had undertaken, or to die in the attempt.

"I have come to explain my note of last evening," he said, and the earnest, anxious face which looked so trustingly into his own, grew white with terror as he related his adventures with Dayton.

"You will follow up these men?" she asked, when he had concluded.

"Yes. With apparently unsurmountable obstacles in the way of my success, I am determined to pursue the trail I have begun."

"But the peril?"

Marvin turned an earnest glance upon his fair companion.

"Shall I waver when my father's fate is in doubt? When your fortune, perhaps your life will pay the penalty of retreat?"

With hopeful words he left her. His footsteps echoing on the pavement, seemed sounding a last farewell to her solicitous heart as they died out, and she knew that he had gone to meet his foes and her own—perhaps a victim to duty and love.

He did not pause until he had reached the City Hall. He was some time in accomplishing the object of his visit, but at last was seated in the private office of the chief of police.

The superintendent welcomed him cordially and evinced his interest in his welfare by the sincerity he exhibited in questioning him as to his whereabouts since he had last seen him.

Marvin's replies were formal and laconic. Anxious to broach the subject nearest his mind he said abruptly:

"You remember that I was dismissed from the detective force, two months since?"

The chief nodded, a grave look on his face.

"I remember that your resignation was asked for," he corrected—"an act I have since regretted."

Marvin regarded him in some surprise.

"Then more recent developments—" he began.

"—Have corroborated my first impressions of the case—that personal enmity evoked the order from the commissioners."

The young man's face broke into a gratified expression.

"I am glad this is so," he said, "for it opens the way for what I desire to say to you. I have come to ask a reinstatement on the force."

The chief's face grew grave.

"You understand that cannot be the work of a moment," he replied. "After you left, I positively learned that the complaint against you was a plot of men unworthy of credence. But, in order to obtain your reappointment, certain steps are requisite which will cause some delay."

"I do not intend to ask for a reappointment," declared Marvin; "my sole object in seeking you is to endeavor to obtain, not the position nor its salary, but the authority to act as a detective in matters which affect myself solely."

The superintendent looked curiously at the young man.

"The same hand," continued the latter, "which drove me from my position under you, has wrought me and mine a cruel wrong—has pursued me relentlessly since I last saw you. I will not weary you with the details of as foul a conspiracy as your officers have ever unearthed; only will I state to you that a bold, powerful league of criminals, knowing that my father possessed a valuable secret, have kidnapped him, and that, finding me on their trail, they have endeavored to assassinate me by means only employed by the most desperate of men."

"You startle me," exclaimed the chief, intensely amazed. "If such a confederation exists—if any citizen has been placed in their power, the entire force shall combine to outwit them."

"No," returned Marvin. "Such an action would be known to them before you could execute a move, for they have spies even among your men! These men have apparently ceased

to war on society at large, and have centered their operations around an individual and his fortune. Should I secure your coöperation they would simply kill their victims and disappear—destroy even the faint clew I now possess concerning them. The time may come when concerted police action may be required; but at present, my own patience and individual effort alone can move in the initial steps of a dark mystery, freighted with peril and complications. I therefore ask that you invest me with the powers of a detective, trusting to my honor that the privilege will never be abused—that in following out a personal issue, I will make no sacrifice of the interests of justice."

The chief drew out a drawer in his desk and took from it a silver badge.

Silently he handed it to Marvin. The face of his visitor flushed with gratitude at this sincere token of the official confidence in his honesty of purpose. His eyes gleamed brightly as he read the inscription on the glittering plate—"Secret Service Corps, Metropolitan Police Force. Chief's Staff."

His steps were lighter, his face more hopeful as he left the City Hall, the good wishes of the superintendent, and his proffers of assistance at any time, ringing in his ears. A dark chase before him—a mystery enveloped in the deepest gloom, he resolutely put aside the thoughts of the apparently unsurmountable obstacles in the way of success and set his wits to work to begin his task with all the prudence and caution of a detective undertaking a case requiring extraordinary skill, perseverance and daring.

He thought of Adrian Revere. To find and follow this man might lead to important results, but he knew the character of the individual too well to believe that he would keep any traces of his connection with the League's desperadoes at his command in his possession, or that he would not exercise the greatest caution and secrecy in his operations with them.

Dayton! He shuddered as he recalled the name and fate of the conspirator, but his eye brightened as the memory suggested a course which might establish the identity of some of the band he sought to find. He knew the locality of the room of the outlaw where he had surprised him the night previous, and he determined on a visit to the place.

No one hindered his passage to the building which he had entered so cautiously after the casting of the dynamite shell into his room; no one observed him as he opened the unlocked door of Dayton's apartment and looked around the room in search of some valise, or package, which might contain papers bearing on the case in hand. The apartment appeared to have been only a temporary lodging-place for the man, however. A small sachel lay empty in one corner, and its contents, a change of clothes, had been placed in a drawer of the bureau. The most persistent search failed to reveal any letters or papers, and the detective was about to abandon this venture as a failure when he picked up a card lying face down on the floor.

He would have cast it aside again as an ordinary business card had not the words written in pencil on the back—"Thursday evening"—attracted his attention. The front of the card was the common inscription—a firm name, its line of trade and location. There was nothing in this which in any way served to indicate a possible location for a band of criminals, yet he could not divest himself of the idea that, as it had probably been in Dayton's possession, it really bore some relation to the nefarious business of the outlaw.

He pocketed the piece of pasteboard, left the room, and mechanically turned his feet in the direction of the number indicated on the card. A half-convincing belief that he was wasting his time caused him to betray but little enthusiasm in his effort, but as he gained the street a singular circumstance placed him on the alert and awoke to action every impulse of his nature.

He had passed the building designated on the card. Its five stories bore a continuous series of sign-boards indicating that, like neighboring structures, it was devoted to the business of a mercantile firm. There were two entrances from the street, the one into the store and counting-room, the other to a broad stairway. The double door of this latter entrance, however, was closed.

Had it been unlocked and open Marvin would probably have paid but little attention to any one entering the place, but, as he watched the doorway, and saw a man appear, look suspiciously up and down the street and then quickly let himself into the hallway, relock the door and disappear, his suspicions were aroused. Glancing up at the top story, he observed that its windows had broad sheets of heavy manila paper stretched across them, and he began to think that, after all, the card found in Dayton's room might lead to some important developments.

The appearance of a second man, in whom he imagined he traced a marked resemblance to the companion of Torrance the night previous, and whose injuries on that occasion had evidently been slight and transient in their effects, verified Marvin's suspicions.

"I have located my men," he murmured. "They are in the top story of that building!"

He would have been content to remain where he was, and follow his men when they left the place, but as he was inspecting the building from the rear he saw drive up to the side of the pavement a wagon which he at once recognized. It was the truck vehicle of the police department employed in light errands and in official business. A bright thought in his mind, Marvin approached the driver, who was taking a small package from the seat and was about to dismount.

"Ransom," accosted Marvin, advancing to the man.

The other glanced at him suspiciously, and then, with a hearty smile, grasped his hand.

"You, Marvin?" he cried. "Where have you been for the last month?"

Marvin replied in a general way, and asked:

"Delivering supplies?"

"Yes; the main wire to head-quarters is weak at several places, and we're splicing and repairing. This package I'm leaving in the store yonder until the repairer comes along."

Marvin caught his arm as he stepped toward the door of the store near at hand.

"Wait a minute," he said.

The other glanced at him in some surprise.

Marvin pointed upward.

"Is it the wire running across that block?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Are the instruments and material in this package?"

"Yes."

"Give it to me!"

Ransom started in absolute amazement.

"Give it to you?" he replied. "Why, what do you mean?"

"I mean," he said, in low, cautious tones, "that if I can gain access to the roof of the adjoining building through this one, in the guise of a line repairer, I may be able to bag some game the department will be pleased to dispose of."

"I understand," replied Ransom, and without cavil he handed him the package.

The corner building was of the same height as the inside one in which Marvin believed the conspirators were assembled. A word to the employees of the building sufficed for them to show him the way to the roof, and the detective had gained one point at least. He glanced eagerly over the roofs. A skylight on the minor structure told him that he must move with caution, and not be seen. To insure safety should he be watched he examined the police wire, detached a rusted and crooked piece, and supplied a new piece from the coil in the package.

He approached the skylight cautiously and looked over. He drew back as quickly as he saw in the room it lighted four men. They were smoking, their chairs tilted back against the wall, and the voice of a loud speaker, borne to his ears through a broken pane of glass, was that of his captor opposite Long Island—the man Torrance!

He was exultant as he lay by the side of the skylight and realized that the men he sought were within hearing distance—that he could distinguish their words. The first sentence borne to his ears startled him. It was:

"Then Robert Marvin has confessed?"

"No," replied Torrance to this inquiry of one of his companions. "Imprisonment, torture, both have failed to secure from him one word relative to the missing fortune."

"And yet, the casket has been found?"

"As good as found. Starvation and torture failing with our obstinate prisoner, we concluded to try strategy, at Revere's suggestion."

"And it succeeded?"

"Yes. Last night I directed one of the men to put my plan into operation. This morning he handed me a letter. It was directed to the chief of police and it was written by Robert Marvin. Our plan had been to raise a window in his prison and open the blinds as if to admit air. We knew his first move would be to throw out a letter as soon as he could write it, and we took pains to leave paper and pencil in his reach."

"And he did it?"

"Two hours later an envelope went fluttering down to the street, and was duly picked up by a man on the watch."

"And its contents?"

"Marvin related to the chief of police his story in brief, an attempted location of his prison, and the whereabouts of the long-missing casket."

An exclamation of excitement from Torrance's auditors was borne to the listeners' ears.

"It proved to be a private banker's residence. Revere was right, Dayton wrong. The casket had been disposed of by Marvin, and under instructions he had carried it to a private banker; but where, never mind; the place we know. Within two hours the casket will be in our possession. We have reconnoitered the residence. After nightfall the locality is a quiet one, the house indifferently guarded."

"What is your plan?" asked one of the men.

Torrance smiled confidently.

"A good one, I assure you," he replied. "Two of you are to accompany us—"

"Us?"

"Yes. A certain friend of mine will accompany me."

A certain friend! Revere was the name which suggested itself to Marvin's thoughts. Was he destined to trace down these men and capture not only themselves but the hidden ruler of the League?

The conversation was abruptly terminated as a new-comer appeared at the door. The man Torrance arose, and the coterie breaking up, Marvin withdrew from his place of espionage and retreated to the street below.

Dusk was just coming down over the city and the thoroughfares were crowded. He mechanically placed the relay instrument and small coil of wire in his pocket, and took up a position in a doorway adjoining the building containing the men he was watching, and stood undecided, meditating profoundly over the case in hand.

Within his power to arrest were the men who held the secret of his father's fate, but to approach them now would be to substantially destroy the clues he was working on. By following them he might ascertain his father's place of imprisonment; more—might be enabled to foil their schemes to secure the casket of jewels. These two points were the main elements of the case. He must not act rashly, but in attempting to follow diverging trails he might be at fault. He must seek cooperation.

With the idea in view of hastening away and obtaining the assistance of a fellow-detective he was about to proceed on his mission when he drew back quickly. Three men had appeared on the walk in front of the entrance to the building. They were Torrance, the man Barnes who had been with him on the shore the night previous, and a companion.

Marvin drew back within the shadow, and stood silent and earnestly attentive to the muffled conversation carried on by the little coterie.

"We are ready," he heard Torrance say. "We will approach the place from different directions. Remember the signal—a low whistle, twice repeated."

"All right," responded Barnes, and he and his companion started down the street. Torrance was about to leave the steps, also, when a man came hastily around the corner, and, attracting his attention, caused him to start back and await him.

"Torrance?" spoke the new-comer, in hurried, excited tones, inquiringly peering into the face of the other.

"Yes. What is it? The police—the—"

"No—our prisoner!"

"Marvin?"

"Yes; he has escaped!"

A cry of dismay and rage broke from the man's lips, drowning the half-suppressed ejaculation of surprise and gladness which issued from those of the watcher.

"How did it happen?"

"I cannot tell, but an hour since we visited the den. The bars of the window were torn out and a rope made of bed-clothing hanging to the ground told the story."

"Confusion! We are lost! Is there no trace of him?"

"None."

"Then hasten back and warn the men to leave. Marvin's first move will be to inform the police. As for myself, Arnold the banker's, and that, too, quickly, or my game will escape me!"

He gave a few hurried directions to the man in a whispered tone, and then started down the street at a rapid pace. In his excitement he would scarcely have noticed Marvin, the detective, had he come face to face with him.

He did not pause for vehicular aid in his project, but led Marvin a wild, rapid chase until a retired residence portion of the city was gained.

A low stone building surrounded by a large garden seemed the objective point of his journey, for he paused as he reached it, darted into a side lane, and a minute later leaped the stone wall inclosing the structure.

Marvin did not delay in following. It was a dark, starless night, and he took the risk of scaling the wall and dropping into the underbrush which grew in profusion inside the fence.

"The banker's residence," he murmured, under his breath. "Will I, single-handed, be able to cope with these men?"

He put all thoughts of securing co-operation aside, now, however. He had crawled within the shadow of a large lilac-bush, and his eyes swept the somber-looking mansion before him.

No lights were visible in the place except in one room—evidently the library of the house. The window was open and one side of the inside blinds pushed back. Within the apartment, plainly revealed seated at a desk, bent over and engrossed with a pile of papers, was a white-haired man, all unsuspecting of the peril which menaced his peaceful home.

This must then be the banker's home—the man within view the banker himself. Was he, too, destined to come within the baleful scope of the operations of the dreaded League? Was his to be the second life which was to pay the

penalty of being concerned in the secret of the Thorndyke fortune?

Suddenly there came a low, double whistle. It emanated from the shrubbery so near to Marvin that he started as he marveled that his appearance had not been discovered. It was the signal agreed upon by the conspirators! Whether Barnes and his companion had gained the garden previous to Torrance's arrival or had crept thither since, the detective did not know, but he saw two forms resembling them coming toward the spot stealthily. A minute later a third form, enveloped in a long cloak and slouch hat, glided from a point near the fence.

"We are all here," he heard Torrance say in a guarded tone. "Yonder is our man—within the room the casket. Remember no shots if it can be avoided, and—"

His voice died to a murmur, responded to in as low a tone by the new-comer. Who was the latter—what his mysterious identity? If the silent worker behind the real manipulations of the League, Adrian Revere, Marvin resolved that he would devote his main attention to him, whatever occurred.

He drew his revolver and held it in his hand ready for action, wildly excited, trembling with suspense in every nerve. He saw the men arise and start forward, saw a flying figure cross the garden at a bound, the fifth in that singular coterie, and heard a startled exclamation from the quartette before him.

For the new-comer, evidently unaware of the operations of the others, and having no connection with them, had advanced to the low steps leading to the side entrance of the library. The door seemed to give at his touch, but his appearance, while it alarmed the conspirators, did not balk them in the execution of their fateful crime.

For at that moment, as the cloaked stranger and Barnes advanced to the window, he heard Torrance's voice speak in hurried and excited tones:

"Into the room, quick! Banker and visitor—down both and secure the casket!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE HAND OF FIRE.

THE man who sat within the library of the mansion that fateful night was indeed the private banker indicated in the overheard conversation of the conspirators.

Whether friendship with Robert Marvin, or his high reputation for honesty and fidelity, had been the cause of his becoming the monitor of the fortune of the dead millionaire, he had at all events been selected as the warden of the treasure, according to the intercepted letter of the escaped prisoner of the Dynamite League, by Robert Marvin himself.

As he heard a sound at the door, he started from his work, glanced quickly at an open safe by his side, and arose to his feet. The desk before him was covered with papers and articles of business correspondence; and besides, held a small round server, upon which was a common tin box. The cover was off, and a glance within revealed a singular phosphorescent mixture. It was a package-can of a new illuminating paint, which had been left with him that day to experiment with. A recent invention, its value consisted in the fact that when applied to an object, that object in the dark would stand plainly outlined. Thus the door of a bank vault painted with the mixture would be as plainly illuminated as if by gas and could be seen by a watchman from the street. With a view to an experiment of its alleged merits, Hiram Arnold, the private banker, had secured the novel invention, intending to apply it to his safe door that night.

All this—the banker, the room, the package of paint, the new-comer, the aroused conspirators, Willis Marvin saw at a glance. His hand clasped his revolver firmly as he realized that a crisis had arrived and he heard Torrance's ominous words:

"Into the room, quick! Banker and visitor, down both, and secure the casket!"

The long-cloaked stranger and Barnes had started toward the window, Torrance and his companions remaining in the garden. Behind them was Marvin, trembling with excitement, undecided what to do.

He saw the two assassins spring within the window, heard the banker utter a loud cry of alarm at sight of a form entering the apartment from the outside, and then with a crash the library lamp went out.

A moment's delay meant the loss of the Thorndyke fortune, if the casket was within that apartment—it might be the life of the banker himself! The confusion of moving bodies, of startled tones in the darkened room, excited the detective to the intensest pitch of suspense. He could remain silent no longer. Forgetful of all save a confidence in his own courage and strength, he sprang from the shadow of the lilac-bush toward the open window.

At that minute a shot was fired in the library. The pistol-flash momentarily showed the

white-haired banker sinking back, a look of mortal agony on his face. Then, as Marvin gained the window, a pair of strong hands seized him by the arms, drew him back to the garden, and relaxing the hold on his body clasped his throat in a viselike grip.

It was Torrance! The detective's eyes started from his head as he struggled vainly to arise, his opponent's knee on his breast; he lay at the mercy of his foe. His sight dimly viewed the darkened room, black and somber except where a broad streak of phosphorescent light indicated where the overturned illuminating paint had fallen—and something more!

A hand of fire!

As if a supernatural manifestation, a human hand radiantly outlined and holding a smoking revolver in its clasp swayed in mid-air, its possessor in the obscurity of darkness! The inspiration of ready comprehension told the detective the truth—the mystery of the paint—and told him, too, that the possessor of that hand was the murderer of Hiram Arnold!

It moved hither and thither; there was a loud sound as of a door torn from its hinges; then a shrill whistle sounded from the library. Torrance arose to his feet.

But he dealt his well-nigh strangled foe a terrific blow with the butt-end of his revolver as he said to his companion:

"Quick! They are successful! Run for it! Meet Barnes and secure the girl as agreed on."

The half-stunned detective lay inanimate for but a moment; then he sprung to his feet. Crossing the rear stone wall he saw the forms of two men, one in advance of the other, and one of them was the mysterious cloaked conspirator with the flaming hand.

It flitted across the wall, it guided him down the alley after the man. A brand of fire and blood on this man's hand, it was destined yet to play an important part in the concurrent results of that fateful night's tragedy!

"Is it Adrian Revere?" he muttered, as he darted after the two fugitives; "and who is the stranger? An accomplice, or some person bent on an outside game in the tragedy?"

The others had gained a thickly-populated street. The man with the flaming hand was in advance. He had evidently observed the paint, for he had incased the hand in a handkerchief. The other, ten yards behind, kept up a steady run. He was the strange visitor at the library-door.

Suddenly, as the latter reached a large tenement-house, he glanced up at the window and darted into its open doorway. The detective half a square behind him accelerated his pace, reached the place and sprung toward the door. It was locked!

"One of them cornered," he concluded. "He lives here; that is evident. Now for the other; but which one has the casket?"

The moment's pause had given the man in the cloak a good start, and a minute later he turned into a side street. When Marvin gained the corner he had disappeared!

He stood breathless, chagrined, disappointed. He had lost sight of the principal actor in the tragedy. But the man who had entered the house a short distance back—he could find him at least. He turned to retrace his footsteps, when coming down the side avenue, he saw two men walking at a rapid pace. He shrunk back against the fence and crouched within a jog of the structure as he recognized the approaching men as Barnes and the companion of Torrance in the garden of the banker's residence.

"And the casket?" he heard the latter ask, eagerly.

"The captain has it. He fired the shot, and then made for the safe. There's one thing curious, however."

"What was that?"

"The stranger, whoever he was, was about to give fight when the captain gave the order to scatter."

The captain! This must be he of the flaming hand—the principal in the affair—the man of all others in connection with the League who should be hunted down and punished!

"I will follow them," murmured Marvin. "Once their trail lost I shall be at sea again."

He inwardly censured his excitement which had led him into the error of hoping to cope with his enemies, single-handed, but present action and the progressive issues of the case caused him to forget all save the trail he was following.

Where would that trail end? If at the den of the men, their capture would be attempted at once. He kept far in the rear, but never lost sight of them. He began to grow suspicious and curious, however, as finally they turned into the very street where he had left Constance Thorndyke. Then he recalled the hastily-uttered words of Torrance in the garden and discerned that they were bent on operating a new phase of the business of the night.

Constance Thorndyke! If her abduction was the object of the men, Adrian Revere's hand alone could have directed the affair, and necessarily he had been concerned in the murder of the banker.

Marvin started, and his heart beat wildly as

they reached the very building in which Constance was. A few yards distant across the road was a carriage, the driver mute and motionless upon the box.

An encounter with these men seemed inevitable. Marvin's hand grasped his revolver and he sprang forward rapidly as they disappeared within the doorway of the house.

At the very steps he paused and almost fell backward in wild wonderment and surprise. Gliding from the hallway a female form approached him—Constance's habiliments—her very form! Across her veiled lips the woman placed her finger warningly, pointed to the hallway, and rapidly descended the steps, beckoning to Marvin.

Constance Thorndyke or her counterpart escaping from capture or involved in some new mystery! The impressive episode influenced the detective to follow the veiled figure. Across the street, a quiet order to the driver, and she disappeared within the carriage with a significant gesture to the detective.

He was by her side almost before he could realize what he did. Wonder, surprise, were in his face as the carriage dashed rapidly from the spot.

"Miss Thorndyke," he began.

His companion placed a trembling hand upon his arm, and her head thrown back to watch the street behind them appeared to verify his fast-increasing belief that she was the woman he loved escaping from peril.

"You fear pursuit?" Marvin's curiosity and excitement impelled him to ask.

"Hush! I—"

The low quivering voice paused there, and the veiled figure fell backward as though a terrible strain of excitement passed, she had succumbed to the reaction.

"She has fainted," murmured Marvin, as he caught her form in his arms. "The driver of the carriage—where has she directed him to take her? What is this new mystery?"

He tapped on the little front window as he spoke. No attention was paid to his signal, for the vehicle dashed forward at a tremendous rate of speed.

It stopped a moment later—so suddenly however that Marvin was thrown forward with a crash. Darkness, entire and deep, surrounded him. The door of the vehicle was rudely torn open, a hand seized him by the arm, he was dragged forcibly from the carriage, and a low voice whispered in his ear—the voice of a man:

"The woman is safe. At the peril of her life and your own, do not refuse to follow me quickly, quietly!"

Despite himself, the detective allowed his mysterious companion to lead him from the spot. In the darkness he only knew that they seemed to cross a stone floor and then ascend a flight of stairs.

They had reached a landing and he heard a knob turned. His companion had pushed him before him. He was ushered into a room, the brilliant lamplight in which so dazzled his eyes that for a moment or two he could not discern the faces of half a dozen men who sprang from chairs and benches and confronted him.

"Barnes?" he heard a voice he recognized, ask.

"No," was the reply of the new-comer's companion. "Not Barnes, but Marvin, the detective!"

The clearing vision of the young man returned as he divined his peril; his hand sought his revolver and he backed against the wall with extended weapon.

His eyes sweeping the throng caused him to realize his true position.

He had been deceived, entrapped, and the men before him were Torrance and his fellow-members of the Dynamite League!

CHAPTER VII.

A TERRIBLE DISCLOSURE.

WILLIS MARVIN, overwhelmed more by the singular complications of the case in hand than by being unexpectedly confronted with Torrance and his accomplices, was at a disadvantage in his perilous position. The pale, resolute face bespoke his determination to sell his life dearly, but the conflict was of brief duration, although, as he saw his enemies make movements to secure his weapon, he leveled his pistol at the breast of the leader and fired.

The shot resounded loudly and echoing through the room sped wide of its mark, as Torrance sprang quickly aside, and the smoke enabled two of the outlaws to gain the detective's side. The weapon was torn from his hand, his arms pinioned, and in their powerful grasp he was held against the wall, at the mercy of the fierce-eyed throng about him.

One of their number had leaped forward, a gleaming knife in his hand.

"Marvin!" he cried, furiously. "We'll end his detective career, once for all."

But Torrance placed an interposing hand between him and the object of his vengeance.

"Hold!" he cried, imperatively.

"Dead men tell no tales," growled the desperado, "and this fellow has interfered with our plans too often."

"This one may be the last," replied Torrance, significantly. "At all events, we'll hold him until the captain sees him."

He made a gesture to Marvin's captors as he spoke.

"To the attic room?" inquired one of them.

"Yes, and be sure you secure the door fast and strong. There must be no escape this time."

Struggling violently, Marvin was hurried from the apartment amid the fierce threats of the men around him. They forced him up a narrow stairway and into a room whither they thrust him, retiring and locking and securing the door after them.

"Duped! defeated!" murmured Marvin, once alone. "These men have the shrewdness of inventors and the boldness of assassins."

He glanced about the place they had thrust him into. A deep chagrin overcame him as he thought of the skillful ruse of the carriage. He became serious when he realized that unless he escaped these men would dispose of him quickly and effectually.

Was it a ruse? Was the veiled woman a decoy? Until this moment of sober reflection he had not paused to consider what deep plotting these men might have conceived. Was the woman he had mistaken for Constance Thorndyke not Constance, but an ally of the League disguised to decoy him, her similarity of form, and feigned excitement and fainting-spell being employed to deceive him and withhold an investigation of the truth until he was in the power of Torrance?

If it was Constance, he thrilled at the thought that perhaps she had been playing a part! No, no! Any suspicion that the fair, pure girl he had learned to love, could become a party to intrigue and crime was absurd—monstrous.

Yet how closely had the encounter with the woman been timed! How singular that, at the very moment of his arrival at the building where Constance was, she should meet him as though he had been expected!

Revolving theory after theory in his mind, wondering what his father's fate might be, what that of Hiram Arnold, what the mystery of the fifth member of the conspirators—if the stranger was such—at the banker's home, the Telegraph Detective found restraint galling and terrible. When he considered the strands lying loosely about in the chain of events encircling the devoted lives of those he loved, and he helpless to assist them or to defeat the plans of his enemies, he paced the room excitedly.

The thought fired him to activity; he examined the door and the walls critically. The former resisted every effort at forcing it. The window, a small aperture directly under the roof, was securely barred, and by the dim light cast through it into the apartment, he discerned plainly from the disordered bed, the dirt-stained walls and foul floor, that it had been occupied, and that, too, in all probability, by a prisoner.

Perhaps it had been the place of incarceration of his father? Perhaps that father, recaptured, was at that moment in some other part of the house?

He placed the broken chair on the bed and climbed to the window. He ascertained that he was in the rear of the top story of the building, and he recognized the locality from surrounding landmarks. He noticed, too, that the bars of the window were strongly imbedded in the brick-work, and that the distance to the ground was great; so had to abandon all hope of escaping from the window or of attracting outside aid from the alleyway.

Hope! A thrill shot through his frame like an electric shock as he glanced upward and his eyes caught sight of a wire running from the roof of the building in which he was imprisoned and thence to the top of the one across the alleyway. Three feet above the window it crossed his vision between the bars and the sky above, and every nerve tingled with excitement as he recognized its smallness of strand and knew that it was part of a local line.

If it should be the police wire! As the thought struck his mind and he realized what would be the result, should he be enabled to communicate with the police, his hands trembled, and the sickly pallor of suspense crossed his anxious face. To secure outside interference—to capture the band and the casket would indeed be a great achievement.

He reached out the bars of the window to endeavor to grasp the wire. His efforts were unsuccessful, however; his fingers could not reach it. Taking from his pocket the coil of wire he had carried from the building where he had first traced the League, he bent it, and again reaching from the window, flung it over the outside strand.

His heart beat high with hope and triumph as he found that the tension of the wire admitted of his drawing it as far as the window. As he examined it with trembling fingers, his eyes sparkled with delight. It was the police wire! His experience told him that in this surmise he was correct.

An expert electrician, his judgment enabled him to determine what to do and how to do it quickly. Separating the wire with his knife, he attached a piece from the coil in his pocket to it and allowed the other end to drop over the

side of the building. He knew from the direction of the wire that it went toward police headquarters, and that with time he could command the police force. Introducing the little instrument in his pocket, the relay of the line repairer, he inserted the wire, allowing it to run through, and grounding the end by connecting a piece of the coil with it and grounding it by twisting it around a water-pipe in one corner of the room.

The circuit was formed! A prisoner in the hands of desperate men, he had them at his mercy, for he felt assured that within a few moments' time he would be in communication with police headquarters.

As he fixed his location in his mind, he was enabled to judge what line he was operating. Every nerve was on the alert as he applied his finger to the little instrument and sounded the call to the operator at the other end of the line.

He listened in breathless suspense for a moment or two. The perspiration stood in beads upon his brow, his breath came quick and heated.

Tap—tap! He had been successful! The peculiar echo of his movements, a tacit reply to his signal apprising him of the fact.

"Important!" his nimble fingers spoke on the transmitter. "In peril! I have spliced the line. Keep open for what I have to say. I am—"

There was an interruption. Loud voices reached his ears, engaged in excited conversation at the door, while a key went fumbling around the lock.

In the semi-darkness of the room the wire might escape detection, was his first thought, and springing on the bed, he bent the wires to the wall and placed the instrument at his side far from the door, and sat awaiting his visitors.

The noise without, the momentary expectation of the arrival of his foes did not deter him from continuing his work. He knew that the very first words of his message would enchain the attention of the man at headquarters—that his ready intelligence would discern a peculiar combination of some kind in progress, and that he would keep the line open until he had time to tell his story sent clicking over the electric path.

How his fingers flew! In the briefest words possible he told of the murdered banker and gave the location of the house in which he was imprisoned as near as he could guess it—which was quite accurate, as he recognized a building just seen on the adjoining street—and that he was in the power of a desperate band of men who threatened his life every moment.

Even in his excited state of mind he discerned the voice of Torrance. He could distinguish the familiar intonation, but not the words.

The leader of the League had been actuated to the visit by the return of Barnes, and was now questioning his accomplice.

"You secured the girl?" he had asked.

"Yes, by the aid of Arminie, who was shrewd enough to secure the detective and lead him here."

"She was waiting for you?"

"Yes; she had gone up to the girl's room, dressed exactly like her, to carry out the plan agreed upon, and had drugged her so we easily removed her to the place settled on."

"The Irving Place house?"

"Yes."

"And you saw—"

"We saw the captain, and he tells a startling story. The treasure casket—"

"What of it?" demanded Torrance, quickly.

"There's been some blundering mistake. The stranger who burst into the room and resisted us must have carried it off."

"Confusion! Has our plan miscarried?"

"Yes; and the captain is raving mad about it. He thought he gave the casket to me. Instead, he handed it to the stranger, apparently. He says he saw the man coming after him—saw him go into a building near by, and a third man pursuing in the rear. When I came to tell him that I didn't get the casket, he understood it all, for he recognized the stranger as—"

The man leaned forward and whispered a name in Torrance's ear. The latter started visibly.

"It can't be!"

"It is, for certain! You should have ended Marvin's career in the garden."

"I wish I had," replied Torrance, with an oath. "Curse the luck, we're ruined if the casket is gone, but I'll settle the affair, as the captain has told you, about our prisoner. He wishes to spare him to hold an influence over the girl. I'd rather end him, once for all, and feel secure from his infernal interference in our plans."

With these words Torrance unlocked and opened the door of the prisoner's apartment.

"Where is he?" a familiar voice broke upon Marvin's hearing, and Torrance entered the room.

Behind him pressed half a dozen of his men. The principal in the robbery of the banker advanced within a few feet of Marvin and strained his vision to catch a full view of his face.

"Again!" he said, sneeringly, as he met Mar-

vin's glance. "You seem to be unfortunate in your attempts to follow us."

Marvin was silent. A slow agony burned in his mind, as he feared the wires would be discovered, or himself removed before he could complete his message to the police.

As it was, he ventured to slowly telegraph the sentence:

"Even now I face the man who robbed the banker this—"

"What was that?"

It was one of the men who spoke sharply, suspiciously. The faint click of the telegraph instrument had caught his ear.

With his free hand Marvin tapped nervously on the side of the bed. It quieted the outlaw's suspicions.

"I have only a few words to say to you," said Torrance, pacing the floor. "As a body of men acting under imperative instructions, we do not hesitate at violence to accomplish our ends. Had you accepted your situation and awaited our action, in time your father might have been restored to you. As it is, you have brought on your own fate. The powerful League of which I am a member brooks no interference from God or man."

"Villain!" cried Marvin; "dare you acknowledge that it was you who kidnapped my father?"

The other laughed scornfully, but with a shade of anger.

"You will gain nothing by hard words," he said. "I offer you your liberty after a time, on one condition. You must leave the city, and seek Constance Thorndyke no further."

"I refuse," came firmly from the young man's lips, "to treat with either you or any member of your vile band."

"Fool!" hissed Torrance. "For myself I would not bandy words with you. It is only at the direction of another that I do so."

"And that person Adrian Revere!" cried Marvin.

The other started.

"No matter," he returned; "I have done my mission. You refuse my offer; then die! I leave your fate in the hands of these men."

Click! click! The little instrument at his side sent the quick words on their way as Marvin endeavored to procrastinate the termination of the interview.

"These men," he replied, scornfully. "Who are they! The off-scourings of the State penitentiary!"

A low growl from the villains warned the telegraph detective that he had incurred their increased resentment.

"Your perceptions as a detective are not very acute," replied Torrance. "You are in the hands of no ordinary criminals—Jacques Warnecke, an exiled Belgian, and once possessed of the royal diamonds of the duke of his province; Leary Osborne, the most skillful safe breaker in America; Barnes, the Canadian bank note engraver, and myself, will scarcely care to be classed as men from the slums. Ah, I do not fear to reveal our identity. Our fears of your inquisitiveness will soon cease."

The clicking instrument in its monotonous taps had ceased to attract the attention of the excited and muttering men. Torrance turned to go.

"You can do with him as you please," he carelessly announced to his confederates.

Two men started forward. They fell back as Marvin sprung to his feet.

"Hold!" he demanded, imperatively.

Torrance turned.

"You have something to say?" he asked.

"Yes, I have something to say!"

"Out with it."

"You deem me in your power," cried Marvin, with rising excitement and flashing eyes. "You are mistaken. Before one of your number can leave this building the police will guard every outlet!"

Torrance started, but assumed a careless, scornful smile, as he retorted:

"You think to frighten us."

But scarcely had the words been uttered when a bell sounded through the place.

"The signal of danger!" exclaimed Torrance, turning a startled face on his companion. "The police!"

"Yes, Sidney Torrance; the police!" cried Marvin, in ringing tones—"the police sent for by me—summoned even from this prison of yours!"

He stood boldly defiant, triumphant in face and manner, victory endowing him with a recklessness which might cost him dear.

"What do you mean?" demanded Torrance; "you summoned them?"

"Ay; I summoned them! I mean that first notifying the police that I was here, your prisoner, while you have been so boastfully introducing yourself and your accomplices, I, with this little instrument—and he revealed the telegraph relay to Torrance's startled vision—"have been clicking name for name, word for word, over the wires to the office of the superintendent of police!"

Startled, dismayed, appalled, a white alarm

in his face, Torrance fell back with an oath. His companions had sprung into the corridor; but he, even with arrest threatening him did not yet retreat.

"It is a lie!" he cried. "You could not do it!"

The instrument lifted triumphantly in Marvin's hand, and his excited face as he clicked the transmitter was his reply.

"You may escape for a time," declared the undaunted Telegraph Detective, "but the law will soon overtake you. At least one of your accomplices is by this time safely cornered or under a close surveillance."

"The captain," insensibly murmured Torrance, his eyes glittering with rage.

"No; his time will come when the mystery of the hand of fire is elucidated. The fifth member of your conspirators—the man who left the banker's garden after you, and disappeared in a house near by. I traced him, and his whereabouts I have communicated to the police."

A wild, derisive shout like a cry of triumph and satisfaction broke from the outlaw's lips, startling the young man with its intensity.

"Fool!" he cried, as he drew a revolver and leveled it at Marvin's breast. "Your warning to the police has precipitated your own death, and your information concerning the man you refer to, has doomed him you would have saved. For the fifth man of the party in the banker's garden—the man you have betrayed to the police as one of the assassins of Hiram Arnold, is your father!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THROUGH FIRE.

AT the terrible announcement that in his eagerness to secure the capture of the banker's murderer he had placed the brand of guilt on his own father's name, Willis Marvin, the Telegraph Detective, fell back, overcome with dismay.

"Great heavens!" he cried. "Was I blind not to have foreseen this?"

The demoniac light in the eyes of Torrance faded to serious alarm as the warning bell sounded again through the building.

"Blind and reckless both, to trust your feeble will against that of the Dynamite League," he cried. "Willis Marvin, your quest ends here. Die!"

He leveled the revolver straight at the detective's breast, and fired as he spoke. Amid the smoke and dim light in the apartment he was satisfied that his murderous mission had been executed, as he saw the form of his victim sink back to the bed; and he gained the corridor at a leap.

The wildest confusion prevailed among the men as they hurried to the end of the hallway. A man coming hurriedly up the stairs glanced eagerly after them.

"Torrance," he cried—"where is he?"

"Here," replied the outlaw leader. "What is it?"

"The police!"

"The bell informed us of that. Are they in the house?"

"No, but at the rear door. They came only a minute since—six of them in the ambulance wagon."

"Marvin spoke the truth, then," remarked Torrance.

"They examined the building closely, and then knocked at the door, demanding entrance. They would have passed on, but one of the men flashed a light and it betrayed us."

"Can they force the doors?" inquired Torrance.

"Yes, and will do so, very soon!"

Torrance's eyes flashed like two meteors as he seemed to reflect deeply.

He turned to Barnes, who stood near by.

"Are all the men here?" he asked.

"Yes, every one of them."

"Let them take the most valuable packages of the last silk job and drop them down the shaft."

"And the men?"

"Take the winding stairway to the cellar, carry the goods through the break in the wall and skirt the sidewalk wall until the next street is reached. Then one by one creep cautiously out to the street and hide the plunder."

The men, gathered around him with alarmed and anxious faces, started to execute his command as the sound of a heavy hammer beating on the doors below attracted their attention.

Torrance turned to Barnes again as he saw the men disappear.

"The building must go," he said, decisively.

The other started, as if astonished.

"As bad as that?"

"Yes; we must leave no trace behind—not even the detective yonder. Quick! To the first floor and fling a burning lamp among the packages there."

He himself started for a doorway through which several of his men had already disappeared with packages—the secret exit from the place.

Barnes, with cool precision, descended to carry out his leader's commands. The door of the

prisoner's room leading to the corridor had not been locked, and the hall was plunged in darkness as the outlaw took the lamp with him.

"The fiends!" murmured a voice from the room. "They destroy life by any means to rid themselves of an enemy."

It was Marvin who spoke—Marvin whose feint at being mortally wounded had succeeded in deceiving Torrance. He sprang to the door of the corridor once it was clear, but stooped to pick up a glittering object on the floor—the revolver dropped by Torrance in his excitement.

The Telegraph Detective's heart beat wildly as a faint smell of smoke and burning wood permeated the air. He was about to endeavor to seek the exit spoken of by Torrance when he heard a step coming rapidly up the stairs.

"It is Barnes!" he murmured. "He shall not escape me if I have to drag him through the fire to the police!"

The fire! Already the dense increasing smoke told the detective that the fell purpose of Torrance had been accomplished, and that in a few moments all chance of escape in the direction of the lower portion of the house would be cut off; yet he nerved himself for a struggle with the villain, and as he saw his approaching form dimly outlined in the corridor he stepped forward to meet him.

There was a contact. Barnes brushed against Marvin, but the exclamation which followed instantly altered the detective's preconceived plan.

"Torrance?" spoke the League confederate.

"Yes," replied the detective, in a low tone.

"I have fired the place. The police have broken in, and we must hasten to escape before the fire cuts off the passageway."

He brushed past his supposed superior, and Marvin followed without a word. He hoped that those of the League who had preceded were sufficiently far in advance to admit of his carrying out a suddenly projected scheme when the street was reached.

Down the winding staircase, his mind in a whirl of excitement, following close on the heels of his guide, the detective hastened. Utter darkness in the cellar prevented him seeing his companion. He could only follow him by the sound of his feet.

At last a break in the masonry composing the foundation of the building was reached, and Barnes crawled through. Marvin following found himself on the damp clay bottom of the sidewalk pit. As they proceeded, neither spoke, but the detective started and clasped tightly the weapon in his hand as he saw ahead of them a dim ray from the street-lamps through an opening in the end of the sidewalk.

The form of a man emerging through it was faintly outlined. Barnes paused as he reached the place and appeared to listen intently. Then he peered forth and turned to Marvin.

"Come," he said. "The fire-engines are in the street, and in the confusion and crowd we shall not be noticed. Now is our chance!"

"Wait."

The detective could observe his companion start.

"What do you mean?" demanded the man, drawing back suspiciously.

"I mean that we will remain here a minute or two longer."

A low cry of alarm from the scoundrel's lips told Marvin that the man had discovered the error he had fallen into.

"Not Torrance!" he cried, as he endeavored to shake loose the grasp of the detective.

"No," replied Marvin, coolly, "but yours, truly, Willis Marvin, the Telegraph Detective," as he pressed the muzzle of the revolver to Barnes's temple.

"Trapped!" wailed the outlaw, in a low cry.

"Yes, Barnes; and my prisoner! Now, listen to me," came in steady tones. "Walk straight ahead into the street, without a word, a move, or attempt to escape, or I will send a bullet to your heart."

Not the quiver of a muscle traversed the frame of the detective as he laid a hand on the shoulder of his prisoner and advanced with him to the street. Once there he caught his wrist in a vise-like grip, the pistol in deadly menace by his side.

The wretch ground his teeth in mute anger, and glared murderously at his captor.

Even then, amid the surging mass of people rushing pell-mell to the burning building, he would have attempted an escape, but the tight clasp of Marvin's hand, the glitter in his eye, subdued the desperate impulse.

"Dorsett!"

The word was a call, quick and clear, from Marvin's lips, directed to a man hurrying by—a man who had just emerged from the alley behind them.

The person addressed turned.

"Marvin!" he cried in wild surprise. "You here? For Heaven's sake, what does this all mean—the message, the fire?"

His eyes alternated in wild glances from the detective to his prisoner.

"It means that I have escaped a terrible death," answered Marvin. "It means more than I can delay to tell you."

"I must return to the men," said Dorsett, quickly. "We had just gained an entrance to the house when the fire broke out."

"You can do better service by remaining here," assured Marvin.

Dorsett regarded him inquiringly.

"This man?" he asked, with a penetrating glance at Barnes.

"Is my prisoner?"

"Your prisoner?"

"Yes, and a most important one. Have you a pair of handcuffs with you?"

"Yes," and Dorsett, the central station detective, produced a pair from his pocket.

"Hold out your hands!"

The rogue sullenly obeyed Marvin's order.

They had drawn him aside from the hurrying throng, and as Dorsett locked the steel wristlets on his hands, Marvin spoke quickly in his ear:

"This man holds the entire secrets of a terrible crime—of a series of crimes—murder, robbery and fraud."

"And you wish me to take him in charge?"

"Yes, for his accomplices are somewhere in the vicinity, and I know them. I wish you to take him in charge and guard him carefully, for his friends are desperate men, and he a criminal of more than ordinary ingenuity."

"I will take him to the station at once," and Dorsett started.

"Not now," restrained the young man; "he is not to be locked up. Listen to me, Dorsett," spoke Marvin, rapidly. "The superintendent has given me peculiar privileges in working this case. It is essential to my plans that this man should not become a prisoner in the hands of the police until I have learned something further about his crimes and associates."

"What shall I do?"

"Remove him to some safe place for an hour or so. See; yonder is the Galaxy restaurant," continued Marvin, glancing around and indicating an all-night eating-house. "The proprietor is a staunch friend of ours. Take him there; secure a private room and watch him closely until I return, in about an hour."

"All right," and Dorsett crossed the road with his prisoner, while the Telegraph Detective lost himself amid the crowd, seeking for the men he believed to be in the vicinity.

But his search was unsuccessful. He did not make himself known to the police, who were endeavoring to gain access to the burning building, but, after skirting the crowd, and convincing himself that Torrance and his companion had disappeared, he started for the restaurant.

He found no difficulty in locating his associate, Dorsett, in a private room. The latter sat sharply eyeing the sullen, angry-faced prisoner, who did not deign to speak a word.

Marvin closed the door, beckoned to Dorsett, and drew him to one corner of the room. His face was alight with new and excited thoughts. The first words of Dorsett were:

"What does all this mystery mean?"

"Success or failure in the tracing down of a series of terrible crimes," replied the detective, seriously. "There is no time to lose. The first important step is to investigate to-night's murder—the killing of Hiram Arnold, a banker, by yonder man and his colleagues. Was my message understood at head-quarters?"

"Yes," answered Dorsett. "Vague as it was, we knew something unusual had occurred. An old telegraph operator myself, I readily comprehended that the sender of the message was terribly excited from the rapidity with which it was clicked out. The chief quickly sent a man to the place of the murder and ourselves to your aid, although we had a difficult time in locating the house, and two officers to the building where one of the murderers was located by you."

A cry of dismay and grief broke from Marvin's lips at these words, and his face paled visibly.

Dorsett stared at him, bewildered, but the other vouchsafed no immediate explanation. His mind foreseeing that if the mysterious stranger was his father, he readily surmised that his appearance at the banker's house was not one of crime, but to anticipate and outwit his enemies, and he trusted to circumstances to correct the mistake he had made and turned his attention to the vital issues of the present.

"Dorsett," he went on, gravely, "the League of criminals to which this man"—indicating the prisoner—"belongs is a confederation of desperadoes who do not hesitate to employ extraordinary measures to outwit its foes. We have no time for details now. I have a plan to reach these men, first through the confession of the prisoner, next through my escape not being known to his confederates."

"A plan?" repeated Dorsett, interestedly.

"Yes. No matter what it is. I only ask your implicit confidence and co-operation for a few hours."

"Which is granted freely," responded Dorsett, heartily.

"Then do not intimate that I am alive, nor my true identity to any one," requested Marvin.

"You will disguise yourself?"

"Of course; I must remain unknown to every one."

"And then?"

"Then I will endeavor to force yonder man to a confession by the same extraordinary measures he and his confederates have employed in their plans."

"And that is—"

"To return in half an hour with a carriage and the means of putting my project into execution. Watch him till I return, for I see he is getting uneasy at our whispered conversation. He is a thorough desperado, and will require especial watching."

"Will you remove him to the station?"

"No."

"Where then?"

The eyes of the Telegraph Detective gleamed with a wild enthusiasm in his secret project as he whispered impressively, in Dorsett's startled ears:

"Into the presence of the murdered banker!"

CHAPTER IX.

A GHASTLY SURPRISE.

"To the presence of the murdered banker!" Marvin had said, as he hurried from the room containing Dorsett and his prisoner, and the words gave the clew to his newly-conceived plan.

He knew not positively if Hiram Arnold was dead, but he had seen his face in the ghastly glare of the pistol explosion, and familiarity with such scenes had entoured the belief that the expression on that aged face was the death-gleam of an expiring soul.

His feet bore no laggard weight of indolence or indecision as he traversed the streets. He made but one stop. At a large pawn-shop, with its glittering sign, he paused, ascending the retired stairway and in a few minutes appeared in the store below, with the proprietor rudely awakened from his slumbers, but anxious to please a customer who came from the police whose favors he most earnestly coveted.

Ten minutes later, completely disguised as to hirsute appearance, Willis Marvin reappeared on the street, a large, square package under his arm.

"It is fortunate that Isaacs had such an apparatus as I desire to use," he reflected. "It saves the time and trouble of a protracted search."

He hailed a carriage driving by and ordered the man to convey him to the Galaxy restaurant. Once there he ascended the stairs at quick bounds as he alighted, leaving his package in the carriage. As he reached the corridor where the room was located, he started forward to intercept a man who, at his approach, had risen from a kneeling posture near the door of the room occupied by Dorsett and his prisoner.

The man was too quick for him, however, for he hastened to the window at the end of the hall and swung himself out to the roof of an adjoining structure with the rapidity of a squirrel.

"A spy," murmured Marvin, with knit brows, "but we must not delay to follow him."

Dorsett arose and regarded him curiously as he burst unceremoniously into his presence.

"Come!" ordered Marvin; "we will go. You did not know me?"

"No, your disguise is perfect."

Dorsett led Barnes down the stairs into the carriage, and Marvin, with a low order to the driver of the vehicle, joined them.

He was silent and thoughtful, evidently impatient to reach his projected destination. Once as they whirled by the building, where he had seen the mysterious stranger disappear, he glanced up at the place quickly. His cheek blanched as he saw, standing in the doorway, an officer, and evidences of an unusual commotion about the place, but he did not order a stop, making his anxiety regarding the stranger—if he really was his father—subservient to his newly-formed plan of action through which he hoped to trace the real murderer of the banker—the man with the hand of fire.

The carriage came to a stop under the trees lining the walk in front of the gloomy mansion of the murdered man! A little knot of men stood at the iron gateway conversing in low tones, and at the open doorway two men whom he recognized as detectives, were comparing notes in a confidential manner.

He glanced at the prisoner, whose face was pale and startled, his eyes gleaming restlessly, but he veiled their expression to sullen unconcern as he saw that he was observed.

The detective leaned over to Dorsett.

"Let no one approach the prisoner," he whispered, "and under no circumstances allow him to know whether the banker is dead or alive. I will return in a few minutes and explain my project to you."

Then he leaped from the carriage, carefully closing the door after him. The men at the gate stared at him curiously, and as he ascended the steps the two men at the door intercepted him with a detaining hand—a barrier to his further progress.

"You are in charge of this case?" asked Marvin.

"Yes," was the reply.

Marvin threw back his coat and revealed his badge of authority.

"I am empowered to act in the case in connection with you," he explained.

They stared at his unfamiliar face and form, but bowed courteously, one of them leading the way to the library.

"Is he dead?" inquired Marvin, as they reached the apartment.

No need to ask. He did not hear the assenting reply of the officer as he gazed at the floor of the library. There, lying prone upon the blood-stained carpet, his eyes fixed in the staring rigidity of death, a ghastly wound in his breast, lay the murdered banker. In an adjoining apartment the wailing of the frightened servants told that, although childless and wifeless, the old man had sincere mourners among his household.

The disguised detective glanced quickly about the apartment. His searching vision was rewarded by evidences of the recent struggle. The door communicating with the iron steps, through which the stranger had entered, was still open, and the little cabinet-safe wheeled close to the desk bore evidence of having been ransacked. The cherry shelves were broken and several large bundles of papers were scattered over the floor.

The officers had brought a lamp to the scene and its rays showed the broken one near the desk, and revealed also the package of illuminating paint, its contents dripping from the green baize of the desk to the carpet, where a few drops had touched the banker's outstretched hand.

There the illumination had faded, turning to a deep, somber purple in hue.

A small piece of paper—the end jagged and rough as if torn from a string—attracted the detective's attention. He picked it up and perused it with a start. It read:

"In trust for Robert Marvin."

"The casket was taken," he decided; "this evidences that fact."

His two companions watched him interestedly. They saw him turn the body to examine the wound, observed him pick up the bullet which, penetrating the heart, had gone clear through the body, and they marveled at his methodical coolness as he wrapped it in a piece of paper and placed it in his pocket.

"Had the body better be disturbed until the coroner comes?" suggested one of the men.

Marvin did not look up, but prepared to lift the corpse.

"I will take the risk of what I do. Help me to get the body into this chair."

They obeyed him mutely, but wonderingly. They lifted the dead banker to the chair, wheeled it to the desk, and stared in the wildest amazement at Marvin as they saw him arrange the body in a position as natural as though the victim of the murder were still in life.

He turned to the men, finally.

"What I have done," he said, impressively, "has been done to attempt to secure the confession of one of the accomplices of the real murderer. Will one of you go to the carriage outside and bring me the package it contains?"

Both men started to obey his request. They returned in a few moments and placed the heavy package they bore on the desk.

The intensest curiosity was in their startled eyes as they saw Marvin rapidly tear the outside paper from this package. The polished ebony box which met their view offered no solution of his mysterious proceedings, but as he threw back the cover each gave utterance to a little cry of surprise.

"You don't mean—" began one of the men, excitedly.

"To galvanize the body of the murdered man—yes," responded Marvin, quietly.

The box contained a fine electrical apparatus. It was an expensive scientific relic, doubtlessly pledged by some impoverished student, and answered the projected purpose of the detective exactly. He removed it to one corner of the room, drew a fire-screen in front of it, adjusted the wires, examined the dynamo-galvanic jars, and then tested it, and drawing the wires under the screen applied them to the neck and elbows of the dead man.

"It is a ghastly and unpleasant experiment," he said, as he noticed the mute horror in the faces of his companions, "but the end justifies the means. One of you take his place behind yonder screen; answer all questions asked in a low voice, and when the signal is given start the current of electricity. You," indicating the other, "seat yourself opposite the dead man with pencil and paper as if taking notes. Retain an attitude and expression of face as though listening to his words."

He saw the men take up their positions, and then repaired to the carriage. He made a gesture to Dorsett, and the latter alighted with his prisoner. He transferred his charge to Marvin at a word, and the trio entered the gloomy structure.

Marvin paused at the doorway and drew Dorsett close to him.

Rapidly, in a low whisper, he conveyed to him his intentions and projects. The detective started in excited amazement while listening

attentively, and finally walked toward the library with the murmured words:

"I understand."

Marvin could feel the man at his side trembling in his grasp, evidently deeply impressed by the mysterious whispering and actions of his captors. But he was too shrewd a criminal, too fully an adept in police methods, to be lured into committing himself; so he preserved a sullen silence when his captor said:

"Barnes, you understand why we have brought you here?"

Marvin waited for a moment or two for a reply. None being vouchsafed, however, he continued:

"You are in our power, with evidence of a crime against you, but we do not seek to have you pay the penalty of another's crime. You did not fire the fatal shot, we know, but you were the partner of the real assassin, which is nearly as bad. That man we intend to find."

Barnes broke into a coarse, derisive laugh:

"And you expect me to tell you who he is, I suppose?" he demanded.

"Exactly."

"Then plainly, I won't."

"You will!"

The outlaw stared at the quiet, determined voice of the detective.

"We'll see," he muttered, sullenly.

"I'm going to give you a chance for your life," continued Marvin, impressively. "The fortunes of the Dynamite League have turned and you had better save yourself while it is yet time. We know your companions, all except 'the captain,' and him we shall find, if not through you, then by some other means. Suppose I should tell you that the banker is not dead—"

The outlaw started.

"Then it's no hanging affair," he cried, defiantly, "and I'll stand the penalty."

"You'll think better of it, Barnes, when I tell you that if this affair concentrates on you, the penalty for attempted murder, robbery and conspiracy means a life sentence."

He waited to note the effect of his persistent attacks upon the mind of the other. He could tell that he was weakening.

"Now listen to me," the Telegraph Detective resumed, "and make your decision. I agree, if you will confess the truth, to shield you from the men you fear to betray—to have you sent safely out of the country. I shall take you into this place, where you may be startled to see the man you believed your accomplice murdered sitting up, even if dying, ready to identify his assailants. If before he speaks you confess the name of the man who fired the shot, well and good; if not, I will send you to jail and show no mercy in prosecuting you to the extreme end of the law."

He led him along the hall to where the open door of the library allowed a broad path of light to fall across the corridor carpet. He paused as they gained it, and extending one hand said impressively:

"Look!"

A cry like that of a man confronted with the wraith of his murdered victim broke from the outlaw's lips as he fell back, startled and white.

"Listen," murmured Marvin, as he held his prisoner in a firm grasp.

The manacled hands trembled like an aspen; the lips of the prisoner were set in an expression of horrified interest.

"And you could identify the men who attacked you?" spoke the voice of Dorsett.

The fascinated eyes of the prisoner saw the man writing at the table—saw the ghastly form of the banker—saw, too, that the hands were moving and the muscles of his face apparently expressing the motions of speech.

"Yes," was the reply, apparently from the colorless lips.

Marvin drew his prisoner across the threshold. The horrible mockery of death had accomplished his work, for the outlaw leaned heavily on his arm, trembling violently.

"Speak!" cried the Telegraph Detective, "to save yourself—who is 'the captain,' who fired the shot at yonder man?"

The white lips of Barnes opened, his trembling hands clasped the steel chain, his eyes distended with a horrible desperation, as he replied, in a terrified tone:

"I did not do the deed, it was—"

The sentence never ended. A flash at the window, a deafening report, a long shriek of pain and agony from the manacled outlaw, and he fell back to the floor, writhing in mortal agony a moment, and then lay still and rigid in the embrace of death.

Startled, stunned, the occupants of the apartment moved not at the terrible culmination of the exciting scene before them. Only Marvin, recovering his presence of mind, traced in the sudden death of Barnes a new venture of the dreaded League which followed friend and foe so persistently, and sprung to the window.

"Quick!" he cried to the other detectives, as he caught sight of a flying form darting through the shrubbery and sprung after it, "and do not let the murderer escape. Upon his capture depends the good name of my father, perhaps his very life!"

CHAPTER X.

A DEEPENING MYSTERY.

NEVER was a scene of more startling interest revealed to the detectives of New York than that in which Willis Marvin and his companion now took part. The four men in hot pursuit of the flying murderer of Barnes, the air echoing with shots, the streets rapidly filling with alarmed people, the vicinity of the double tragedy became a veritable Babel for the time being.

A chagrined, disappointed quartette, one by one they returned to the library where the two victims of the night's fateful crimes lay. Marvin's face was a picture of dismay, for he realized that for a second time the infamous League in awarding death to a traitor had complicated and imperiled his most cherished interests and those of the father who had suffered so much for his fidelity to the cause of his client, Gerald Thorndyke.

He glanced curiously at the officer who had knelt by the side of Barnes.

"He is dead, quite dead," replied the man, in response to Marvin's inquiring look.

"Then our mission here is ended," said the Telegraph Detective. "Will you see that the galvanic battery is put up and sent home?"

He gave the officer the address of the pawnbroker from whom he had obtained it and turned to leave the place.

The former stopped him with a question.

"There will be inquiries made for the reasons as to the change in position of the body by the coroner," he insinuated.

"I will give a satisfactory explanation to the chief," answered Marvin, and he left the place, followed by Dorsett.

The intelligent eyes of the latter gleamed with a latent curiosity as they gained the street.

"It has been an eventful night," he began.

"It is the beginning of others equally fateful," was the response.

"What do you mean?"

"That death lurks at every by-street and corner for the man who seeks to trace down this League of criminals."

Dorsett did not seem to be startled by his companion's statement; instead, he met his troubled glance wistfully.

Marvin read his emotions aright. A warm friend, a partner in many a daring adventure, he trusted and valued Dorsett, and acting on a sudden impulse said:

"I read your thoughts, Dorsett. Your venturesome spirit craves the excitement and glory of the capture. Be it so! Let us together follow out his deep game."

"But you forget that I am in the dark as to the motives or operations of the organization," suggested Dorsett.

"That is true, but to-night my mind is too fully harassed and confused to give you a succinct account of the case. Let the matter rest until to-morrow night. Say you meet me at nine o'clock."

"Where?" asked Dorsett, eagerly.

"At the Galaxy restaurant."

"Very well; I will be there. Meantime there is nothing I can do in this case?"

"Nothing except to watch out for the men whose names and description I endeavored to telegraph to head-quarters and to privately inform the chief of police, but no one else, of the true statement of the case."

"And you?"

"I have some side issues to follow which I must trace down, alone and unaided. I will have something of importance to tell you when I see you again."

They parted, going in different directions, at the words. Marvin's step was rapid, his manner excited, impatient, as he hastened toward the building where the mysterious stranger had disappeared.

The officer at the door when he passed in the carriage was still there. An exhibition of his badge prompted him to confidence and attention, and he answered his questions readily.

"You were sent here by the chief?" inquired Marvin.

"Yes."

"To find a man on description?"

"Exactly."

"And your success?"

"None. My partner and I are on guard—he in the rear, in the hope of bagging our game if he is still in the vicinity, but it looks a hopeless case."

He proceeded to detail his project in the case to Marvin's attentive ears. He had been sent there hurriedly from head-quarters and directed to find a man imperfectly described. A talk with the landlady of the house revealed the fact that an hour previous a new lodger, who had come there shortly after dark and secured a room, had aroused her suspicions by going out completely disguised, a few minutes later. This man's description in his false and true identity gave a quick thrill to Marvin's anxious heart.

"My father!" he murmured, "and I never suspected it."

Later the man had returned to the house: she had heard him go up to his room, and directed the officers thither.

They had gone on their mission of arrest cautiously, but when they had broken in the door of the apartment described by the landlady, they had found it empty, in disorder, and a rope hanging from the rear window told them that their arrival having been suspected or observed by the man they sought, he had quietly dropped to the ground below and escaped.

The perplexity of suspense and doubt was in the mind of the detective as he heard of this act, in itself a constructive acknowledgment of guilt seeking escape from conviction. If this man was his father, why had he not boldly faced the officers? Why had he assumed the part of a fugitive criminal? He knew his father was innocent of any crime. There could be no motive on his part for the committal of such in recovering property which he had but to claim in order to possess. Had his long incarceration driven him insane, and were all his actions based on such a complexion of thought, or had he, foreseeing arrest and valuing his liberty to carry out some cherished plan, sought a temporary respite from custody?

When Marvin thought of the deep operations of the Dynamite League, he did not marvel that his father had feared they would lay the crime of the murder of the banker to his charge. However, satisfied that he would soon find his parent, he ascended to the room he had occupied and glanced hurriedly around the apartment.

The chamber was indeed in disorder, but that disorder gave an intelligent clew to the detective as to the identity of its former occupant. An old worn suit of clothes lay on the floor, and he trembled as he recognized the garments his father had worn when he last saw him. The man had gone to the banker's house cautiously, fearing that the members of the League might anticipate him—had evidently determined to prevent murder and attempted to do so, but not successful in this, had secured the casket and come hither.

The casket? Yes, for there on the floor lay a hammer and by its side a steel band. Evidently Robert Marvin was engaged in examining the casket to see if its contents were safe when the officers arrived, for the band must have been a part of it, and lying under the table as if hastily dropped was a folded paper.

Such a wild light sprung into Marvin's eyes as he opened and perused the paper that they seemed to gleam with the intensity of an electric spark.

"Victory!" he cried, in tones of inexpressible triumph and joy. "The first success in my operations against the Dynamite League!"

Whatever its importance, it held sufficient value for him to bestow it carefully in an inner breast-pocket. Then, satisfied that he could effect no further good here, he left the place, a new, hopeful light in his face.

It was the first gleam of joy amid despair and grief. His the proud duty and task to clear his father of any imputation of crime! Though hunted down for murder, an innocent man, that guiltlessness he would certainly prove!

Midnight bells were tolling as he reached the street where Constance lived. As he recalled the episode of the night, the wild ride in the carriage, he grew anxious. The hour was late, but suspense bade him learn if Constance Thorndyke was safe—forced him to seek an elucidation of the mystery of the veiled woman.

He entered the open doorway and rung the bell for admittance to the side of the building where Constance had found a temporary home. The son of the landlady, a sleepy-headed boy, answered the summons.

"Miss Thorndyke," said Marvin. "I have a message of importance for her."

"I will ascertain if she will see you, sir," was the reply.

He disappeared, and was gone so long that Marvin grew impatient, but the lad returned at last, the landlady, hastily dressed, with him.

"Miss Thorndyke is gone," she announced at once.

"Gone?" repeated Marvin in surprise.

"Yes. How and when I can't tell. A lady called early in the evening—a lady I mistook for her at first, deeply veiled. She asked for Miss Thorndyke, and was shown to her room. I did not see her go out—I did not see Miss Thorndyke go out, but about ten o'clock I remember hearing some noise in the hall. They may have gone together, and—"

The last words were lost on Marvin's hearing. He had turned sick at heart as he saw plainly that some deep plot had been concocted and successfully executed to decoy the woman he loved from her home! He could not penetrate the deep craftiness of his enemies, but assigned a ready motive for the abduction as he strode down the steps of the house, leaving the landlady staring with wonder at his abrupt departure. His brain was in a whirl—his mind confused and disturbed.

Beginning with his return to New York city, his experience had been one wild, uncertain flight of adventures. He felt his head grow dizzy, his brain wearied, as he faced this new complication. The exhausted physical system refused to respond to the tireless promptings of his active mind, and he turned his steps toward

his room, feeling the necessity of rest and thought.

A mountain-weight of care on his mind, his eyes closed in slumber as he touched the bed, and it was far into the forenoon before he awoke.

If he censured himself for sleeping while those he loved were in peril, his restored energy of mind and body told him that he was all the more clear and active for the tasks before him. He ate a hurried breakfast, and securing a morning paper, returned to his room to mark out his course for the day.

His attention was fascinated as he saw the main article in the journal headed in sensational verbiage:—"A Mystery of the Night." It was indeed a mystery, as the paper had it.

It related the murder of the banker, the mysterious message to headquarters, the burning of the building, and wound up by stating that the brave young detective, Willis Marvin, had perished in the flames, after remaining at the wire long enough to inform the police concerning a mysterious stranger who had been traced home, but had escaped, and for whom and his four accomplices, whose names had also been learned, the police were now seeking.

Not a hint as to the Dynamite League—not a clew to the real conspiracy behind the murder and his adventures!

"I can only await my father's revealing himself," concluded the young man, as he folded the paper. "The police will endeavor to trace down Torrance and his confederates, while I—I must learn what has become of Constance Thorndyke."

He wandered aimlessly about the streets the remainder of the day. Twice he visited the vicinity of the Irving Place mansion but daylight was no time for successful reconnoitering and he had no idea of boldly facing Adrian Revere yet.

For all that, however, he decided that it was he who had directed the abduction of Constance. If so, why had it been done? whither had she been taken?

"If Adrian Revere knows I will ascertain the truth this very night," he mentally decided; and nightfall found him secure from recognition in his disguise in front of the mansion formerly occupied by Gerald Thorndyke.

It was a rambling structure, antiquated, and set far back from the street. The front windows were dark—the only evidence of occupants being in the house was shown by the library windows in the rear. Besides the servants' quarters, a room situated in a wing was illuminated. Cautiously the detective reached the shadowed corner of the house and peered in through the open window around the curtain, which drawn, fluttered loosely in the evening breeze.

At a secretary, a cigar in his mouth, his hat on, sat the man whom of all others he hated—the individual he believed to be the essence of the formidable confederation he was warring against—Adrian Revere! He was writing a letter, while a low-browed man, twirling a slouch hat restlessly, was seated opposite him.

The detective recognized this man as one of those who had been at the den destroyed by the fire, and his hearing was strained as Revere, after writing busily for a moment, crumpled up the sheet, flinging it on the floor and beginning to write again.

For five minutes there was silence in the room; then Revere arose, handing his visitor a sealed letter as he said:

"For Torrance."

"Very well, captain."

The detective started violently. *Captain!* Were his suspicions destined to be verified? Was he to be enabled to soon place the brand of crime on the brow where it properly belonged?

The messenger left the room, Revere accompanying him to the door. For a moment Marvin was tempted to follow, but the sight of the dark, evil face of Adrian Revere—the thought that Constance might be in his power, perhaps beneath his very roof at that moment—held him spellbound.

"I will face this man," he decided, forcibly. "I have the proofs of his villainy in my possession, and I cannot bear this suspense regarding Constance."

His heart warmed at the mention of the loved name, as he saw the man enter a little side-room as if for a cane or some article of adornment, he leaped to the sill of the window, brushed the curtain aside and stood within the apartment.

It was luxuriously furnished, and his brow clouded as he recalled the friendlessness and destitution of Constance Thorndyke, while this villain, her treacherous relative, enjoyed the luxury of wealth and position. Involuntarily his hand sought the crumpled piece of paper on the floor, and he had bent over, secured it, and regained an erect position, when a quick cry preceded the sudden reappearance of Revere.

"Who are you? What means this intrusion?" he demanded, his face slightly pale, his eyes wearing a startled expression.

As if recognizing a foe Revere had advanced

to the desk. At that moment looking down Marvin saw in an open drawer a revolver, and with a quick spring he secured it. The other started back as if to reach the bell-cord and alarm the house.

"Assassin, would you murder me?" cried the man, in sincere alarm.

"Stop!" came imperatively from Marvin's lips. "Pause where you are, Adrian Revere, or it will be the worse for you."

He made no pretense of a threat with the weapon in his hand; yet the other obeyed him.

"In Heaven's name, who are you? What does this strange visit mean?" quivered the villain, his lips ashen, his hands trembling perceptibly.

Those hands! If their tremor told a tale of guilt, their appearance to the piercing gaze of Marvin revealed a startling suggestion. For, as if for an evening promenade, one hand was gloved—the right hand, and he had not removed the covering to write the letter he had dispatched to Torrance.

"Adrian Revere," spoke the detective, drifting from the terrible secret he felt assured the gloved hand could reveal, yet delaying its elucidation for the present; "I have come here as an avenger and as an officer of the law. You may not remember my face, but my name you will not have forgotten—Willis Marvin."

He had torn the false beard from his face and confronted the other with flashing eyes. The white face of Revere told him that the discovery of his visitor's identity had overwhelmed him.

"You know me!" cried Marvin. "I can see it in your evil, coward face. I have not traced you in vain, Adrian Revere! The long, wearing months of anxiety concerning a father's fate are at an end, and you, who sought to assassinate me, are now in my power."

The craven face told why Adrian Revere leaned for support on a chair. Believing Marvin dead, the sudden apparition had overwhelmed him, and his words brought a new terror to his apprehensive heart.

"To-night," continued Marvin, in cold, steady tones, "the police of New York know of your League—to-night I come here to unmask and arrest you."

"Arrest me?" replied Revere, with an attempt at surprise. "Upon what charge?"

"Murder!"

The other started as though struck by an invisible hand. It seemed as if his mind, suddenly aroused, called his usual boldness to the rescue, for the next moment he turned defiantly on the Telegraph Detective.

"You threaten me with arrest for murder? Your proofs?"

"They shall be forthcoming," replied Marvin; "sit down!"

His words were so imperative, his face had grown so stern and threatening that the other sunk into a chair.

"This pistol," said Marvin, as calmly as he could command his voice to speak, "has one barrel only empty. I can supply the missing bullet, it is here—found in the library of the murdered banker, Hiram Arnold."

Revere's eyes were fixed with startling intensity on the crushed leaden ball Marvin had taken from his pocket. A forced laugh broke from his lips, however.

"A clever coincidence, truly," he retorted. "I own a revolver, you forcibly take possession of it and charge me with the committing of a crime I never heard of before. Any other like proofs?" he asked, sneeringly.

In his excitement and indignation Marvin's prudence had been forsaken for reckless denunciation. He hesitated as he noticed that the man's eyes had assumed a crafty expression. He saw his folly. He was supplying this assassin with a knowledge of what might lead to his successful defense. He did not forget, too, that the scoundrel might hold the liberty and life of Constance Thorndyke in his power.

"I have said enough," he returned. "You dare not deny that, through your devilish machinations, Gerald Thorndyke was led to devise his property to you—that by your orders the Dynamite League has hunted and persecuted the woman whose cause I am pledged to champion."

"I dare deny it, Willis Marvin. What to me are your wild claims, your visionary Leagues? You burst unceremoniously into the home of a private gentleman, under the sanction of the law. Beware! Your second dismissal from the police force may prove more summary than your first!"

Marvin could scarcely repress the rage which this man inspired.

"You and I understand each other, Adrian Revere," he said, in a voice trembling with ill-suppressed anger. "You deem yourself safely entrenched behind the desperate League of criminals who have aided your iniquitous plots? You think I cannot furnish the proofs of your complicity in the crime?"

Revere faced him boldly.

"Whoever you are, officer or impostor, I demand that you leave my house. Arrest me, if you have a warrant; if not, go!"

"Your house?" cried Marvin, goaded to the

verge of rage by the temporary defense Revere was enabled to assume. "Is it your house?"

The question startled the man more than the detective's threats.

"You are insinuating," he returned, in a choking voice.

"I have a right to ask the question," persisted Marvin. "Adrian Revere, the web is woven which will yet lead you to the gallows. As the protector and friend of Constance Thorndyke, I demand to know what you have done with her?"

"I?" replied the villain, with tantalizing indifference; "what do I know of her, pray?"

"Subterfuge will not avail you. I shall not show my hand yet, but I will learn where Constance Thorndyke is—the rightful heiress to this property, unjustly claimed and enjoyed by your self."

"Your wild statements lack proof," Revere responded, boldly.

"Not so!" rung in clear tones from Marvin's lips, as he drew the paper from his pocket dropped from the casket by his father. "Behold!"

He spread out before the amazed man the document as he spoke.

"A will later than your own," announced Marvin, triumphantly; "a will made by my father in favor of Constance Thorndyke, your victim, properly signed and attested. What say you now, Adrian Revere? This, my first move to prove your infamy; my second, the evidence that you are a murderer."

He was anticipating the proof with which he would overwhelm the audacious villain. The latter was pale and alarmed as he gazed at the document, but he coolly regarded his companion a moment later.

"You champion a lost cause, with all your shrewdness," he declared, opening a drawer in the desk. "If Constance Thorndyke were ten times in my possession it could make no difference to you. If this property is hers instead of mine, I shall still enjoy its revenues despite your laudable endeavors to dispossess me. I have outwitted you, Willis Marvin, as I shall continue to defy your plans."

He waved triumphantly a paper taken from the drawer before the amazed detective, who perused the document as it was flung on the table before him.

"You cannot mean—" he gasped.

"I mean," returned Revere, in triumphant tones, "that this very day, legally, and of her own free will, Constance Thorndyke became joint heiress of her father with me; that she is now my wife!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE REJECTED LETTER.

His wife!

The written and printed words in the marriage certificate which Adrian Revere had thrust before the Telegraph Detective's startled vision seemed to shine out like letters of fire and then disappear in a blurred mist.

"Great heavens!" murmured Marvin, with a groan of dismay and horror; "it cannot be!"

For the moment he forgot the presence of his enemy—knew only the anguish of a heart overwhelmed by a terrible discovery, compromising all his peace and happiness, for, if Constance Thorndyke was legally wedded to this man, if the proof was either a clever forgery or surreptitiously obtained, there were but two conclusions: either he had been playing a part and he had been deluded by her all along, or by some foul means this villain had compelled or threatened her to a marriage.

He foresaw in a flash how much Revere could benefit by the act, for the casket must, sooner or later, drift into the hands of its rightful owner, and he her husband would virtually secure by marriage what his schemes had failed to effect.

Even amid perplexity and doubt, harassed by a thousand contending emotions, Willis Marvin decided that Constance Thorndyke had been no party to the crime—that, back of the alleged certificate of marriage, was a deep plot, another mystery which he must solve.

Yet he grew sick at heart as he realized that this very uncertainty regarding the true status of affairs would necessitate the deferring of his contemplated action in arresting this man. The triumphant eyes of Revere told him more plainly than words that the villain understood and appreciated the situation, and that he grew older as he saw the detective greatly disconcerted by this last crowning evil.

To arrest Revere would be to alarm the League and present but one imperfect arraignment of proof against the man. Further, the detective knew what he suspected, but to prove that Adrian Revere was at the banker's residence the night previous with Barnes and Torrance and his colleagues would be the feeble battle of a single man against wealth, position and a shrewd, wicked schemer and his friends. There was another proof, now a suspicion—the hand of fire—but the fear that if Revere was apprehended his enemies would murder Constance, that the girl herself might be in this

man's power in some inexplicable way caused Marvin to hesitate, to forget all save his anxiety for her.

The gloved hand extended pointed to the marriage certificate as Revere's taunting tones broke on the detective's ears:

"Your vague threats against me I defy you to put in operation!" he cried. "I calculate to hold the winning cards, Willis Marvin, and as the husband of the woman whose fortune you thought to share with her I shall resent your intrusion in her behalf any further."

The taunt, the knowledge that this man openly defied him from the standpoint of a villain and murderer, drove the detective nearly frantic.

"Fiend!" he cried. "Clear of the law, for the present, my hands shall force the truth from your craven lips."

He started forward in a tempest of passion. The other shrunk back, and drew a small silver whistle from his pocket and blew a quick, shrill call.

"I will end your insane persecutions," he cried to Marvin, as he evaded him. "My emissaries will be more careful of your guardianship than Torrance."

Footsteps hurrying through the hall broke on Marvin's ears as the other spoke. It meant superior numbers and peril. If a captive among such desperate men as Revere, a farewell to all hopes of a speedy solution of the marriage mystery.

"Beware!" he cried, in wild, passionate tones as he sprung through the window as two men burst into the room. "I will tear your coward heart from your bosom if you wrong the woman I love!"

The jeering, triumphant laugh of Revere maddened him to the verge of insanity as he cleared the garden and gained the street. It was no flight—no cowardly retreat; only the action of a prudent mind, cautious amid even intense excitement, to avert the catastrophe of capture when every vital issue of the case in hand was quivering in an uncertain balance.

"I will dally no longer," he decided. "This man Revere is the person who killed Hiram Arnold. Is he not the captain? Does not the bullet correspond to the ones in his revolver? and the gloved hand—Ah! Adrian Revere, if yours was the hand of fire the subtle fluid on the banker's desk has left a brand neither time nor science can efface!"

Under the impulse of suspense and excitement regarding Constance Thorndyke's fate, he had turned his face toward police headquarters. He had not resumed his dreaded disguise. His mind seemed filled alone with the mysteries surrounding him. He paused as a bell struck the hour of nine o'clock.

"Dorsett," he murmured, with a start. "I almost forgot my appointment with him. He is a true and valued friend, and his advice will be worth something to me. If Constance Thorndyke is Adrian Revere's wife, it can only be by fraud, and he dares not attempt murder while he knows I am watching him. I will not yet inform the police. I will see Dorsett first."

He hastened off in the direction of the Galaxy restaurant as he spoke. Half an hour later he reached the appointed spot of interview.

"I thought you were not coming," said Dorsett, as he greeted his friend, "or something had happened to you."

"Something has happened," replied Marvin, "and detained me. Come, let us seek a private room. I wish to talk with you."

Enconced in an apartment by themselves, the Telegraph Detective began to relate the story of his father's disappearance. The mobile features of his listener expressed the profoundest interest and curiosity as he heard the recital of that marvelous story of the persecutions of the Dynamite League.

From the very beginning, including his strange meeting with Constance Thorndyke down to the interview of the past hour with Adrian Revere, the detective revealed all to his friend. In graphic sentences he depicted the central figure in the scheme, the silent, unseen hand which operated the movements of the band of desperadoes of which Torrance was the leader.

"You now know what I know," he said, in conclusion. "The points to gain are: the capture of Adrian Revere and the proof of his part in the murder of the banker, the finding of my father and the treasure-casket and the clew of the mystery of the veiled woman, the secret marriage of Constance Thorndyke and her present whereabouts. There is no time for delay. Like scattered Bedouins of the desert, routed and driven from a charge, these desperate emissaries of Adrian Revere at his signal will return and still more persistently assail our safety and that of those we seek to rescue."

Dorsett's face was thoughtful, and he hesitated for some time ere he replied to the anxious looks of his companion. Finally he spoke:

"I recognize in the case before us a most singular and perplexing situation. Only one of these men is in our power, so to speak—Adrian Revere. Against him lies a proof certain to us, yet so vague to the law that a clever alibi, even if fraudulent, could easily be imposed on justice. The hand of fire! That point must be traced down at once—that point and a close, careful

trail against this man until the hour for arrest has come. But, not now—not until some of his confederates are in our power for whom the police are now searching; not until we have found your father, Robert Marvin!"

"Then you advise—"

"That we together, independent of the police, follow out this case. Let them arrest the members of the League if they can. As to ourselves, come!" and Dorsett arose.

"You are going?"

"Yes; first to the newspaper offices to insert an advertisement."

"An advertisement?" repeated Marvin, in some surprise, not comprehending the hidden intention of his companion.

"Yes, an advertisement, carefully worded, from you to your father, informing him that it is necessary that he should communicate with you at once."

The words recalled Marvin to this inexplicable aspect of the case.

"It is most singular that my father should act as he has," he declared, gloomily.

"Not at all," responded Dorsett briskly.

Marvin looked up with an inquiring gleam in his eyes.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Picture his case to yourself," responded Dorsett, "and see if under an impulse, in his position you would not act the same. He is in ignorance of your movements, is unaware that the operations of the League are known to you. He only realizes that these men have been potent to carry on an open warfare under the very eyes of the most perfect police system in the world. His mind weakened by long imprisonment, his fears of the power of his former captors exaggerated to an intense pitch, he has fled to secure the treasured casket, to hide himself until he can collect his alarmed senses and act coherently and safely. Alone he was powerless; surrounded by friends whom he doubtless will soon reach, he will defy his enemies, but not until he has recovered from the first shock of the realization that his appearance on the scene of the murder might be construed into the semblance of positive guilt."

Dorsett's rapid logic satisfied Marvin that he spoke truthfully.

"And Constance Thorndyke?" suggested the latter, anxiously.

"We must direct our first attention to her. You need not confess it, Marvin; I see it in your face: you love this friendless girl, and despite these dark schemers that love will guide you to her rescue. From what you have told me I could stake my existence that she never wedded this man Revere of her own free will and consent."

"You believe this?" cried the detective, eagerly.

"I most certainly do. There was a veiled woman in this affair, who was dressed like Miss Thorndyke. I think I see Revere's plot, and on the hypothesis that he has perpetrated a fraud on you and the woman you love, we will proceed to investigation. He might have pretended to her that he held yourself and your father at his mercy and thus have induced her to marry him to save your lives, but I imagine a clever fraud in which the veiled woman has appeared is the basis of the scheme. The veiled woman—elucidate her identity and I promise to find out the truth readily."

He spoke confidently.

"You will go to the Irving Place house?" inquired Marvin.

"Yes, but not openly. Perhaps Revere has secured fraudulent proof of a marriage, and then intends to dispose of the girl.—But what is it?"

Marvin, as if suddenly recalled to a recollection of importance, had drawn back into the room quickly with an exclamation of chagrin.

"The letter!" he cried. "I had forgotten it, and it may give us a clew we should have followed at once."

"What letter?" demanded the other.

"The rough, rejected draft of the epistle sent by Revere to Torrance to-night."

He took the crumpled document from his pocket, and smoothed it out on the table—his eyes expressing curiosity and anxiety as to its contents. Dorsett, his interest now thoroughly aroused, pressed close to his side, and together they perused the letter with eager glance.

Their faces grew excited as they read. The epistle, vague as it was, alarmed them, for it bore directly on the most important issue of the case in which they were interested, and read:

"E. C. NARROT:—

"Failure with the tea-cask, but I have got Arminie to aid me, and when it is returned to its rightful owner, I will possess it as her husband. The air is full of danger, however. Before the son of our visitor was destroyed in the burning building I am sure he told headquarters enough to put the ferrets on a trail, and the father is now at liberty. Of course I never appeared on the scene, but he cautious or all will be traced to cover."

"A new complication has arisen, and Arminie, jealous and exacting, revives too much of the past to suit me. Deceit has been necessary, and troublesome friends must be disposed of. I like the girl, but I depend on you to dispose of her to-night, once for all. I have managed to arrange it so that at

one o'clock to-morrow morning she will meet you and two of your friends at Morris—Leland."

There the letter ended with a scrawl blotted and evidently impatiently made, as the epistle was abandoned and a new one written, the last two words—"Morris—Leland,"—being partially scratched out.

The eyes of the two detectives met as they finished the perusal of this document. Marvin's face was perplexed, that of his friend serious.

"Well?" asked the latter. "Is it a clew?"

"Yes; a vague one, but still worth following up," returned Marvin, excitedly. "I think I see it all. I certainly comprehend the three hidden allusions in the letter."

"Hidden allusions?" repeated Dorsett. "What do you mean?"

"First—E. C. Narrot."

"Well?"

"That is Torrance spelled backward. A clumsy subterfuge—almost a useless one—but it evidences the fact that it is about the same letter he afterward sent to his confederate."

"That looks plain enough."

"The words tea-cask refer to the casket, and the son of our visitor, myself. For, when Revere wrote the letter, he believed me dead."

Dorsett became even more deeply interested—all his quick instincts now aroused.

"As to the balance of the epistle," resumed Marvin, "he refers to Arminie. He refers also to her jealousy—of whom? Of Constance Thorndyke, who is apparently in his power. Having secured proof of a marriage with her, to satisfy this Arminie, I judge—the woman who decoyed me to the den of the League—he had decided to get rid of Constance Thorndyke. As her husband or widower he could claim the property and the casket and defy the last will I possess of Gerald Thorndyke."

Dorsett uttered an admiring expression of his companion's clear reasoning.

"He tells Torrance," continued Marvin, "to dispose of the girl, and by some trickery he intends to have her at a certain place at one o'clock to-morrow morning, to place her in the power of this man. There we are at sea, for Revere has written the names of two towns—Morris and Leland."

The detective's brow was clouded with rapt perplexity as he studied the letter.

"I see but one way out of the dilemma if your theory is, as I believe it to be—a correct one," broke in Dorsett.

"What is that?"

"You know where these towns are?"

"Yes; about forty miles from the city, on a branch of the Central New Jersey Railroad."

"Good! that is one point gained. Let us not worry ourselves as to how Revere is going to get Constance Thorndyke to the place, if he really intends to dispose of her through his confederate. Let us only assume that at one or the other of these two towns at one o'clock to-morrow morning an attempted abduction and murder will occur."

"Well?"

"And start forthwith on the first train for the places designated."

"But, which one?"

"Both. You at Morris, I at Leland; we will be on hand to defeat the plans of these villains."

CHAPTER XII.

A SCANTY TRIUMPH.

CONSTANCE THORNDYKE was the person uppermost in the thoughts of Willis Marvin as he started with his friend Dorsett on the strange quest suggested by the stolen letter, and around her had now centered the operations of the League controlled by Adrian Revere.

When the Telegraph Detective decided that she had been abducted by the direction of this man, he was not incorrect in that surmise. The plot of the Dynamite League to secure the coveted casket had not been formed hurriedly, and a side issue had come up involving the securing of Constance. Alone and friendless, she seemed impotent to injure them; but, surrounded by new and powerful friends, Revere foresaw that he must either rid himself of her, or obtain possession of her, and as he recalled the passionate love he had once experienced for her, he decided on the latter course.

The dead outlaw, Barnes, and a companion—after the affair at the banker's—had been deputized to carry out this branch of his plot and a new agent had been introduced into the project. Arminie Royal, a French girl, formerly an actress, and known to the League as a favorite with Revere, had been instructed in her part by Torrance, and she had set about carrying out the task with ingenuity and care. Attired like the proposed victim of the plot, she had secured an entrance to the apartment of the unsuspecting girl as has been seen, and introduced hers if as a friend of the detective, who had sent her thither to await his coming.

Innocent, pure-minded Constance never suspected a plot, as the false Frenchwoman proceeded to inform her that Marvin had met with success in his endeavor to find his father, and had sent her thither to await his coming. All that Constance remembered afterward was hearing her talk cheerfully, experiencing a sin-

gular dullness of vision and sense, and then she sunk apparently into a deep slumber.

A subtle anæsthetic had been the secret of her insensibility, and the wily Frenchwoman having succeeded thus far, awaited the coming of Barnes and his companion, as agreed upon. Safe in her disguise to pass from the house, she had stolen from the room, unlocked the hall-door, and was peering forth for their expected arrival, when the two men entered the place. As she, however, caught sight of the figure of Marvin, who had been pointed out to her, she quietly informed the men of the location of Constance's room, and with rare tact and ingenuity successfully decoyed the detective into the carriage across the road waiting to convey Constance to the Irving Place residence.

The driver, also in the scheme, understood her quick command; and thus it was that Willis Marvin was entrapped, the shrewd Frenchwoman feigning alarm and a fainting-spell to delude him into the belief that she was Constance Thorndyke.

As to the latter, she knew nothing more until late in the afternoon of the following day. Barnes and his confederate had managed to take her from the room, and securing another carriage conveyed her to the Irving Place residence, where Revere had seen that she was securely confined in an apartment in the rear and upper portion of the house.

When Constance returned to consciousness, she could not comprehend where she was. The appointments of the room were luxurious, but its new furniture was unfamiliar to her, and her head, dizzy and confused, allowed of no ready glimmering of the truth. As her mind went groping back for some solution of the mystery, however, it seemed as if a series of quick flashes of mental light sent her blood-current thrilling to the heart with a vague dread. She recalled a slight glimmer of sensibility in this same apartment—the sight of a hated face—the evil features of Adrian Revere; and she shuddered as if others were around her, and as if, under the influence of some powerful narcotic, she could not speak or act in obedience to the promptings of alarm, but only mutely obey the terrible influence of his more potent will.

Then darkness again; a new sense of life and light; a woman's form flitting about her—the form which haunted the early stages of her experience—the pretended friend of Willis Marvin. Finally a recall to wakefulness and sensibility.

"Where am I?" came from her quivering lips as she essayed to arise from the couch.

She held to a chair for support until her confused head grew more steady; then she advanced to the door.

It was locked and resisted her efforts to open it. Crossing to one of the windows she drew aside the curtain. The dead surface of closed and locked iron shutters met her view! From the other window, however, a gleam of light seemed to penetrate the apartment, and she drew aside the curtain eagerly.

Only a glimpse through the half-closed shutter—only a single look at a little stretch of latticed foliage and a garden, but it revealed a world of intelligence to her vision.

She started back with a long, wistful, anxious cry as she recognized the surroundings.

"My old home!" she cried, in accents of mingled grief and wonder.

Her old home! The flood of tender memories the words suggested recalled a bright, happy past, but was rudely checked by a darkened pall of thought as she suddenly remembered her enemies. For, if this was indeed the house in which her peaceful childhood had been passed it was also the roof which sheltered her deadliest enemy, Adrian Revere.

"I am in his power," she wailed, as she sunk, utterly overcome by the thought, to the couch. "I have been the victim of a new plot of this merciless man."

Reviewing her perilous position if her surmise was correct, she saw but one gleam of hope amid her despair: Marvin, the detective—the pale-faced, thoughtful friend whose anxiety for her troubles seemed more intense than his solicitude for his own peril. Had he, too, fallen a victim to this man's dread power? Anxiety grew to tender suspense as she thought of him; her heart became engrossed in reflection concerning his fate as she arose and again advanced to the window through which she had last looked.

Escape! The thought expressed the purpose, and it did not seem so difficult as she measured the distance to the ground and saw the lattice work running up to the very sill of the window. She raised the heavy window, but in the act turned quickly, for a key grated in the lock of the door, and the next moment a woman entered the apartment, bearing a server containing food.

She was a grim-visaged, coarse-featured woman, and departed the moment she had placed the server on the stand.

"One moment, one question. I beseech you!" spoke Constance, hurrying forward to detain her, but the woman paid no attention as she disappeared, locking the door after her.

A troubled gloom settled down on the fair face as she realized only too fully that she was indeed in the power of her enemy, but she again advanced to the window.

A little cry of dismay escaped her lips as she glanced forth. Evidently the servant had discerned the open window and notified her confederates below for this time a man sat indolently smoking a pipe on a garden seat in the grass plat near the window.

With a sigh of disappointment and despair Constance returned to the couch, and flinging herself upon it gave herself over to the tearful abandonment of grief. Amid her sorrow the hours passed unheeded. She noticed not that darkness had crept unawares into the room. She only started to her feet when it seemed as if some one was endeavoring to open the shutter of the window, and, divided between fear and hope, discerned the probability of the approach of a friend from that quarter.

Her hand pressed to her fluttering bosom, she approached the window anxiously.

"Constance Thorndyke!"

It was a low, cautious, hoarse-throated tone which fell upon her ears. The voice was unfamiliar, and in the darkness within and without she could only discern the form of a bearded, roughly-dressed man clinging to the lattice and peering into the apartment.

Who was it? Friend or foe? Why should the latter approach her in this manner? and again, how could a friend elude the scrutiny of the watcher in the garden unless that watcher had abated his vigilance temporarily?

She ventured a reply.

"That is my name. I am here. Who are you? What do you want?" she answered and demanded in a trembling whisper.

"To aid you. This letter—read it; I am your—"

Crash! Friend or foe the fates were against her strange visitor. She saw his form go down like a flash; heard the lattice-work splinter and break, and she gazed from the window down at the garden below.

There was a moan of anguish and pain, and then all was still. She thought she could discern a dark body lying where it had fallen, on the ground. At least no one from the house, nor her strange visitor moved among the foliage.

She stooped and picked up the piece of folded white paper thrust into the room by her visitor. She stood calculating the chance of an escape for a moment or two, and then turned quickly, as the door was quietly unlocked and opened, and she saw the figure of a man coming from the hall without. Closing the door after him he advanced into the room, placing a lighted lamp on the stand beside the untasted food.

Her form quivering with excitement, her head erect, her attitude defiant, her eyes scintillating indignantly and angrily, she faced him with clinched hands and a white face as she uttered his name—

"Adrian Revere!"

There was no shrinking in the evil features which faced her—only the quiet smile of triumph, the unconcern and fancied security of a powerful foe over a weak and defenseless victim, and that victim a woman completely in his power.

"You are excited," said Revere, for it was he, in smooth tones. "Compose yourself and be seated."

She did not deign to notice or obey his words. The pent-up storm of repressed indignation welled like a mighty torrent in her breast and drove her to impassioned utterance.

"Villain!" she cried, in ringing tones. "I trace your work in this last nefarious act. Beneath my father's roof—my home, not yours! I demand that you restore me to liberty and friends."

Not a quiver of the smiling, sinister face, only deeper malignity in its expression as the man seemed to enjoy her discomfiture.

"Friends!" he replied, sneeringly, "you are beyond the help and call of such, my fair cousin. You are protracting a painful interview and exciting yourself."

His manner tortured her.

"Adrian Revere," she cried, "whatever your evil scheme, it will fail, this time. There is one who knows of this last move, and he assures my release from imprisonment and the speedy punishment of your many crimes."

Her bosom rose and fell tumultuously, her eyes gleamed wildly, her face was transfigured with the impassioned eloquence of an earnest conviction, but the next words of her captor drove a keen blade to the heart of her hopes:—

"I know to whom you refer," he said, slowly, confidently. "Willis Marvin, the detective, but detective no longer, for he is dead."

"Dead?"

It was a wail, the cry of a stricken heart recognizing a stab to love, security and hope which broke from Constance Thorndyke's lips, as, with colorless face and horrified eyes she tottered under the blow so mercilessly dealt her by her arch enemy.

"Oh, it cannot be!" she cried. "Tell me that you are deceiving me—that, in aiding me, Willis Marvin has not met his fate!"

The dark face of the villain was clouded mo-

mentarily with an expression of jealous hate; the smile left his lips, and he clinched his hands in rage as he realized how devotedly this woman loved his rival.

"It is true," he reassured harshly, "and I shall prove it to you. That and something more: what is he to you—you who have no right to love any man but myself?"

The startling words aroused her to meet his glance in alarmed surprise.

"Right? You?" she repeated, vaguely. "To what new mystery does your evil mind hint?"

"The mystery of success for my plans—of failure and death to those who would balk me. Listen to me, girl! You defied and scorned me when I first sought your hand; you drove me to cruel measures, and judging all fair in love for love's sake, I have won you; you are my wife!"

Constance Thorndyke started as though stung by a serpent.

"Your wife? Are you mad?" she cried, "to believe you can deceive me with such detestable representations?"

The other laughed scornfully.

"Oh, you had no light foe to deal with in me," he responded. "Driven to the wall, I resolved upon a desperate game, and it has succeeded—no matter how, by drugs, and influence, and fraud; but before the world, before any court of law in New York city, I to-day can prove that you, Constance Thorndyke, became my wife legally and of your own free will, a few hours since!"

A blur seemed drawn over the eyes of the maiden as a dim recollection of the indistinct scenes of the day came to her mind. She did not believe him; she felt positive that he lied boldly, and for a purpose, but she dreaded the power even a deliberate fraud could give this terrible enemy over her.

She sunk to a chair overcome, her trembling hands trifling nervously with the paper in her fingers. Unrolling it mechanically, a wild thrill pervaded her being as she caught sight of a name written hastily in pencil at the bottom of the crumpled page!

That name was Robert Marvin, the father of the man she loved—the faithful friend whose death Revere had just announced!

The latter, gloating over what he supposed to be her utter submission to the success of his evil plans, paced the floor of the apartment excitedly. He did not know that the downcast eyes were eagerly perusing the open missive in her lap. He never suspected that new elements of complications and peril to his cherished plans were in active operation around him.

"Courage," the letter said; "courage for the present and the future! I, your father's friend, am on the trail of your persecutors. Another day and they shall meet the punishment they deserve! The casket is safe, but I cannot act until I have seen my friends. A deep plot menaces you, but you are not Adrian Revere's wife. He was married two years since to—"

She read the name which followed hastily, and arose to her feet to hide the precious epistle from the man, who came again to her side.

"You are my wife," he said, in low, quiet tones. "The reputable clergyman who wedded us will swear to your identity; the marriage certificate evidences it; the witnesses to the ceremony will support my claim. Enmity or friendship—speak, Constance Revere, which shall it be?"

She shuddered at the name he bestowed upon her and darted such a look at him as made him quail.

"Coward! perjurer!" she cried in thrilling tones; "your base, bold lie will not avail. I know your duplicity; I know your secret; I am not your wife!"

He started back at her eloquent and forcible manner, reading some mysterious knowledge of the truth in her flashing eyes.

"Not my wife?" he demanded, "when the proofs—"

"They are worthless," broke in Constance. "If by fraud and deceit you have imposed a mock ceremony upon myself and your witnesses, it still will not avail you, for you are married already—married, and the name of your wife is, your confederate and ally, Arminie Royale!"

With a cry like a baffled tiger the villain fell back under the force of the terrible surprise she had given him.

"Demons!" he raved, wildly. "Arminie has undeceived her! Curse her treachery, and she knows all!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A TERRIBLE RIDE.

A LIGHT train drawn slowly through the darkness and storm of the night had left Jersey City about eleven o'clock, and Willis Marvin and his friend Dorsett were passengers upon it. If Morris or Leland was really to be the scene of the operations of Torrance and his accomplices that night, they had preceded them on an earlier train.

They had ascertained that Morris was thirty-five miles from the city, and Leland a little station ten miles east of it. Whatever the outcome

of the evening's adventure, even if a profitless quest, they determined to leave no means untried to reach the points desired.

"You have decided on your plan?" Dorsett asked.

"Yes; you will leave the train at Leland; I will go on to Morris."

"Very well. In case nothing occurs at Leland, I will await your return."

As the train stopped at the place mentioned, Dorsett alighted and Marvin continued his journey alone.

The streets were comparatively deserted as, half an hour later, the detective reached the platform of the little station at Morris and the train sped on its way. In the office near at hand sat the telegraph operator, but both waiting-rooms were occupied, and the only adjacent point of interest was an engine standing on the side-switch, while across the road several men, the engineer and fireman among them, were drinking in a saloon.

The detective stood undecided, somewhat disappointed at the evidently profitless outcome of his trouble, when the sound of approaching footsteps on the platform caused him to draw back in the shadow of the little signal-house.

The footsteps ceased, and, peering forth from his covert, he saw three forms. Only one he recognized.

It was Torrance!

It was also Torrance's voice which spoke.

"She has not come yet," he heard him say.

"Is the carriage ready?"

One of his companions pointed across the track.

"It is yonder," he said, indicating a little clump of trees.

"Very well. If she comes, be careful to make no error. Silence her, once for all."

"Why all this trouble? Couldn't the job be done in the city?"

"I do not know. The captain's orders were for this. He's managed to get the girl here, and we must do as he says. She may be in the station-house now."

Marvin could hear their footsteps coming toward him. In order to escape detection he stole through the doorway and crossed the room, disappearing by the other exit.

As he did so he saw, walking rapidly around the corner of the place, a form—that of a woman.

The sight of the figure gave a wild thrill to his heart. Constance Thorndyke, to all semblance, but why had she come here voluntarily? What was the mystery of the perplexing affair?

He hastened after her. He ran around the station and reached the platform. There, crossing the tracks, was the woman, and by her side Torrance!

They went around the engine and disappeared, and in their wake crept cautiously the two accomplices of Torrance.

Marvin heard a wild scream as these latter sprung forward. He saw the woman's form struggling in their embrace, and, pistol in hand, hurried toward them.

Through the space between the cab and the tender of the locomotive he saw the men endeavor to lead the woman to a carriage, a few yards distant. He did not delay to go around the engine, but sprung up the steps to cross it.

At that moment the light of the open fire-box shone full on his features. His face must have been revealed to the struggling woman, for, from her lips, burst a cry which told the detective that he had been mistaken in his conclusion as to her identity—that she was not Constance Thorndyke, but Arminie Royale, the veiled woman, who had decoyed him to the den of the League!

"Willis Marvin, the detective!" she cried, frantically, "these men would murder me after I have aided them in their plans, because I know their secrets!"

She was a woman in distress—a foe perhaps, but he did not hesitate to hasten to her aid. He was about to spring to the ground when Torrance turned and saw him.

Quick as a flash the latter stooped as the detective fired a shot at him. Evading the bullet he seized a stone and flung it directly at his foe.

The detective fell back in the cab of the locomotive, stunned and bleeding, from a wound in his forehead, but, ere his senses deserted him, he heard the cry of the woman:

"Avenge my death and your own wrongs, Willis Marvin! Constance Thorndyke is the victim of a plot of the man I—"

The men bore her to the carriage and roughly sealed her lips ere she could complete the sentence. Torrance, his eyes gleaming murderously, glancing after them, saw the vehicle whirled away, and then looked searchingly around him. In the bottom of the locomotive cab lay the inanimate form of Marvin. Through the open doorway of the saloon opposite he saw the men still drinking. Evidently no one in the vicinity had witnessed the exciting episode of a few minutes previous.

"I'll finish him," he muttered, hoarsely. "He has followed us once too often. He shall die."

The devil's gleam was in his eye, the murderer's purpose in his evil heart. He sprung

into the cab and lifted the body of his enemy to the cushioned seat of the engine.

A quick cut at the bell rope and he bound the piece around the waist of the drooping figure, securing it to the sash of the window. Then removing a scarf from his neck, he tore it in two, and tightly secured the hands and feet of his inanimate victim.

More like a demon than a human being, the glittering intensity of hatred and malice in his face made him a fiend incarnate, as he surveyed his helpless victim. His hand on the lever of the engine, he closed the fire door, and with a fierce pull drew back the steel starting-bar.

There was a mighty throb, and the iron monster seemed to leap forward like an aroused lion. As the outlaw sprung to the ground, whirled over and over by the sudden leap, the engine, with its living freight destined by his murderous purpose to death and destruction, flew swiftly down the switch, out on the main track and dashed away, viewed by the excited men in the saloon, their attention attracted by the noise of the puffing monster holding the entire line at the mercy of its unchecked, mad career.

Along the polished rails, amid the storm and tempest, tearing around the curves and down the steep grades like a whirlwind, sped the locomotive. The wooded heights and lonely valleys were passed in a flash; half the distance to Leland was gained, and then, revived by the rushing air, and the cold rain beating in at the window, the unconscious detective awoke to life with a sigh of confused pain.

Surprise, conjecture, and finally horror took possession in turn of the detective's mind. Death had threatened him in a thousand ways, but never in so horrible a guise as this, a wild flight, an ultimate crash, and a terrible death amid the wreck of the iron monster, amid the ravenous fire and horrible seething steam.

"Devils!" he gasped, hoarsely; "they are human ghouls!"

He strained at his bonds with the strength of a madman. Oh! for one moment's time at the polished lever two feet distant. But he was powerless, helpless, a close captive, every moment bringing him nearer to certain death.

His hands, bound at the wrists, were clasped tightly together in inexpressible anguish, his white face gleamed like that of a corpse, his tumultuous heart-throbs seemed sounding the knell of death to his despairing soul. He seemed flying through space, his excited mind exaggerating the twenty miles an hour to a tremendous rate of speed, and then a wild cry like the last hope uttered of a drowning sailor in sight of land, escaped his parched lips.

Far above him he saw the slackened leather rope which held the rod of the steam whistle. Could he reach it with his bound hands? Even if so, would it avail him to avert the inevitable death which threatened him? He tried to raise his body, but realized that one slip would send him helpless to the floor of the cab. He raised his bound hands over his head. They reached and grasped the leather rope.

"My last hope," he almost moaned. "Oh, Heaven grant it may not be fruitless!"

And then out on the still night air, waking the distant echoes mid valley and forest, shrill, distinct and detonating sounded the screaming danger-signal of the road.

"Dorsett," he gasped, as he saw through the forward window the gleaming lights of a station two miles ahead. "Is it Leland? Is he there? Can he help me? Heavens! a telegraph signal on the whistle! Would it reach his ears? Would he understand?"

Through his mind's eye, as if written in letters of fire, seemed to run the name of Dorsett spelled out by sound; dash, dot, dot; dot, dash, dot, and so on through the name, a light pull on the valve for the dots, a brief waiting for the space, a long, shrill signal for the dash.

"I will try it!" he groaned, wildly. "A last desperate resource."

A short jerk, a long one, an imitation of telegraphic dots and dashes, he spelled out on the shrill whistle the words repeated quickly, wildly, time and again.

"Dorsett!—help! Dorsett! Help! Dorsett! Help!"

The great drops of perspiration stood like huge beads on his pallid brow.

Nearer the red lurid light of the station-lamp, the signal still repeating. He could see the station platform and excited forms rushing hither and thither. He did not know that the men there understood that something unusual had happened and that they had turned a switch leading to the very verge of a railway terminating in a deep, broad abyss.

But Dorsett was there. Even at that flying rate of speed he could make out the form of his companion seated in an attitude of expectation and excitement. His voice rung out with the cry of the whistle, his hands relaxed their hold on the rope, and he fell back awaiting his last chance for life or death.

The engine whizzed by the platform of the station, there was a sudden leap by a dark object through the air, and with a crash a human form clutched the window-ledge of the cab.

One glance from the appalled eyes of the de-

tective, one murmured prayer for help, and he fainted sheer away, a dead weight upon the cushioned seat of the locomotive.

But not until he had seen a hand reach from the side of a form which had been driven flying through the space between cab and tender—a firm, quick hand which grasped the polished steel lever of the iron monster and drew it toward him with all the strength he could exert.

Then darkness and insensibility, the unconsciousness of exhausted vitality, or the somber silence of death, he knew not which.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SCOUNDREL'S FATE.

"STAND where you are, or I will kill you!"

These were the startling words uttered in a tone of mingled desperation and rage which assailed the amazed Torrance, as, after the shock of springing from the engine, he regained his feet and stood, badly shaken up, by the side of the track.

Dying from view and hearing, every moment the lights and sounds of the fast disappearing locomotive subsided as the turmoil of excitement around the little station became augmented. The wicked emissary of Adrian Revere was aware that a form had appeared suddenly from the long grass of the ditched pasture where he had jumped, saw dimly the forms of the men at the station, but he did not recognize the dress or figure of his strange captor.

Only the voice sounded familiar, only its tones told plainly that the speaker was in deadly earnest, and the leveled revolver gleaming coldly, and held by a strong hand, caused Torrance to regain his scattered senses and realize that a new and unforeseen peril menaced him.

His first thought was that a detective had cornered him, but the next words of the stranger removed the idea.

"March straight through the break in yonder fence," came the words, sternly, "or I will end your career with a bullet."

A foe only could speak thus, a wronged, indignant man; but who was this enemy? Mutely the outlaw followed the direction indicated by his captor, and only paused when a little clump of timber was gained, when abruptly there broke from the lips of his warden the single word:

"Halt!"

He turned and faced the other. Even in the darkness he could see that the form was trembling, as if in anger, and the voice, husky with suppressed emotion, boded ill for his safety.

"You are the man, Torrance!" came hoarsely from the lips of the stranger, "the leader of the Dynamite League. Is my disguise so perfect that you cannot recognize your deadliest foe?"

His deadliest foe! Something in his groping mind—something in the glitter of that eye—the passion-toned voice, was a revelation to Torrance.

"It can't be," he cried, as he started back in alarmed surprise, "Robert Marvin!"

The other took a step forward and placed his hand on the arm of his shrinking captive.

"Ay, fiend, torturer! Robert Marvin!" he replied in a deep tone of intense feeling—"the man you have driven from a peaceable, quiet life to such suffering as to-night makes me an avenger. Answer me, and answer me truly, or by all I hold sacred and good I will kill you where you stand."

All the bravery he had exhibited before his boon companions faded from the craven's heart as he realized the depth of his victim's wrongs—the latent fierceness which, already developing, might lead to the execution of Robert Marvin's threats.

"What would you know?" he asked, in a quivering voice.

"Who was the person you just sent adrift in yonder engine? No deception! I swear that I will not brook delay or a falsehood."

"It was your son, Willis Marvin, the detective."

With a cry like that of a wounded tiger, the old man threw himself upon the other. As well might an infant struggle in the grasp of a beast of prey as Torrance in the awful clasp of the wronged father's hands.

He had flung his revolver away. Unmindful of craft or superior strength, he seemed endowed with all the courage of a hero. He bore his foe to the ground; his long, thin hands met about the throat of the powerless ruffian, but with life half-choked out of his foe, Robert Marvin relaxed his clasp.

Torrance was as weak as a child. He lay there gasping for breath, and did not even utter the protest of a word as the man, his anger half-repent, seemed to alter his purpose, and taking a long strap from his waist twisted it tightly around the wrists of the other.

Then he helped him to his feet and faced him with features gleaming with rage and anger.

"If you have murdered my son," he said, in an awful tone, "Heaven help you, for I will kill you. I give you one chance for your miserable life. The woman you enticed here to-night—where have your accomplices taken her?"

The outlaw saw a dim respite at the promise of a chance for existence, vague and uncertain, he realized, for he believed Willis Marvin

doomed, but as he had no means of knowing exactly the direction the men in the carriage had gone, he saw that only deception could prolong his life.

"They have gone down the river road," he ventured.

"Then go you in that direction. Lead me to the spot where they are. A single attempt to escape or warn them, and you die."

If only to procrastinate his fate the villain started toward the river. He had no idea of the way his companions had taken. He knew only that he had instructed them to carry Arminie Royale to some desolate spot and murder her and dispose of the body, so as to leave no trace of the crime. But he hoped to find the trail, to mollify his captor's rage, to secure their intervention in his favor, if an opportunity occurred to signal their aid.

As he trod the sandy road, the deep rut of a vehicle recently passed told him that he was on the right trail. Behind him, grim, silent, paced his captor. In silence the quest began, and it was never broken until, as the road diverged down to the river-banks, the outlaw said in a trembling tone:

"They have turned in here."

There was an old deserted hut a few yards from the road. The carriage-wheels had turned into the sloping ground surrounding it. Two miles or more from the village, it had evidently been selected by the accomplices of Torrance to dispose of the woman he had placed in their charge, for twenty rods distant, Marvin suddenly caught sight of the forms of two men, lifting a burden in their arms.

"They are there," the old man muttered, hoarsely. "Into that hut."

The outlaw hesitated at the order, and then entered the open door of the desolate cabin.

"Lie down on the floor!"

So imperious was the tone that Torrance obeyed. Marvin secured his feet, and then tied a handkerchief over his mouth so tightly that he could scarcely breathe.

As if satisfied that his prisoner could not release himself, Marvin left the place and hastened to the bank of the river. But, evidently, his object was less to meet the two men in the carriage than to rescue the woman in their power. Recognizing in her an important element in the investigation he was making, or moved by a native chivalry, his only thought seemed to be to rescue her from her brutal captors.

There was a little growth of willows near the banks of the stream, and this afforded a covert between the trailer and the assassins. As he stood within their shelter, Robert Marvin could dimly see their movements. The carriage stood near them, and from it they had lifted a form—that of a woman. It was Arminie Royale, senseless from the combined effects of fright, excitement and chloroform.

"What shall we do with her?" he heard one of the men ask.

His companion hesitated, but finally replied:

"Tie a weight to her feet and let her sink."

He seemed to be searching around for a stone as he spoke, while with a horrible coolness and tacit acquiescence in his awful plan, the other supported the form of the inanimate Arminie.

"Hello!" he was startled by hearing his companion say.

"What is it?"

"A boat! See here, Brown, the current seems swift and sets north."

"Well?"

"Ain't the falls a few miles below?"

"I believe so."

"Then we'll drop the sinking business. Bring her here!"

This brutal nonchalance incensed Marvin so that he clasped the revolver as though he would face the men boldly, but prudence bade him wait.

"What do you propose to do?" he heard the other scoundrel demand.

"Lay her in the boat and I'll tell you."

The other did as he requested.

"Now hand me the bottle of chloroform."

He applied a deluging shower of the subtle drug to a handkerchief as the other tendered him a vial, and stooped down, placing it over the mouth and nostrils of the victim.

"It's best to be safe," he muttered. "She's already under the influence of the drug, but this will insure her keeping quiet till the boat goes down if it don't kill her. Cut her loose!"

The rope securing the boat to a little tree was snapped in two by a quick cut from a knife, and the skiff, with its living freight, floated rapidly down the stream.

The men stood watching the craft as it started down the river, and then turned to the carriage.

"Our work is done; now to return the carriage and hasten back to New York," Marvin heard one of the men say.

But he lingered to watch their movements no longer. Skirting the shore he kept in advance of the floating boat, and as he reached a spot where he knew the men, even if on the watch, could not discern his form in the darkness, he threw off his coat and sprang boldly into the stream.

He had calculated his movements to a nicety, and his hand touched the prow of the boat as it passed him. A fierce struggle for the mastery over the swaying boat and the rushing current, and then, with half a dozen powerful strokes, he brought it to the shore.

He tore the handkerchief from the woman's white, cold face, and felt of her pulse anxiously.

"She lives," he murmured, eagerly, as he scooped up some water in his hands and flung it over her face.

He did not appear to mind his dripping garments but sat, for an hour or more, by her side, his eyes gleaming like two coals of fire with the thoughts which excited his active mind.

He started and leaned forward as a faint sigh, a gentle movement of the limbs, the opening eyes and startled cry of alarm and wonder of the prostrate woman told him that consciousness had returned to her inanimate form.

She arose to a sitting posture and glared wildly around as she brushed back her dark tresses, disordered in the struggle with her captors. She could dimly make out the form of her companion, and started back shuddering at the sight of the dark, gleaming river by her side. With a little cry of alarm she made a movement as if to arise to her feet and fly from the damp sward upon which Marvin had placed her.

But he, with a detaining hand laid on her arm, said gently:

"Do not be alarmed; I am a friend."

"No associate of Torrance is a friend to me," cried Arminie, wildly.

"I am neither friend nor associate of Torrance," replied Marvin; "I am his deadly enemy!"

There was no mistaking the trembling intensity of emotion and sincerity in his tone.

"Then what am I doing here?" asked the Frenchwoman, wonderingly.

"You have been rescued."

"From that?" and she pointed to the river.

"Yes, and chloroform."

"And you did it?"

"I did it."

She peered curiously through the darkness at his disguised face.

"Who are you?" she asked, boldly.

"Robert Marvin."

"Great heavens, no!"

She spoke the words terribly startled.

"I am indeed that wronged and persecuted man. It seems strange to you, doubtless, that I, the man whom your accomplices have so cruelly treated, should take the trouble to save your life, does it not?"

The woman hung her head.

"You, too, have aided these men," pursued the escaped captive—"your hand has, perhaps unconsciously, assisted in welding the iron links around my life, yet I have saved you, saved you, perhaps, to return to these very men and again conspire against my life, betray my liberty."

"Never!"

The word was uttered so fiercely that it spoke volumes to the man beside her.

"I believe you," he said.

"You well may," cried the woman, with rising tones. "If for love I followed implicitly the direction of Adrian Revere, that tie is sundered now, I have decyed me hither—he sold my life to his evil accomplices. Love is dead, but revenge, oh, let him beware."

Even in the darkness her white teeth, set in fierce vindictiveness, gleamed like pearls, her hands were clasped in a wild paroxysm of rage.

"If you speak truly, join issues with me, then," suggested Marvin. "I saved your life; now I ask an earnest recompense for the service."

"Name it."

"That you follow my directions for a time, until your husband—"

She started quickly.

"How did you know this?" she asked.

"From papers I found in the library of Adrian Revere's house. Oh, I have not been idle since I escaped his hands. First the casket; then its safe bestowal; then the trail of this man Revere. Shall I tell you how I, hiding about his home for hours, stole into his very house, saw his fair captive for whom he has sacrificed you? No; in time I will detail it all, even to the death I so nearly met in falling from the lattice of her window. But one thing I will tell you—in my possession, stolen from Adrian Revere's secretary, I have the certificate of your marriage with him."

A wild cry rung from Arminie Royale's lips.

"Give it to me!" she pleaded, eagerly.

"When you have proven your fidelity to me, I will," replied Marvin, calmly. "This man sought your life to install Constance Thorndyke as the mistress of his home. In neither venture shall he succeed. I saved you; I also warned her that she was not his wife. What was the mockery of her marriage?"

"A fraud."

"And she was not wedded to him—even when drugged by some base means?"

"No. His proofs are feasible, strong, but false. Shall I tell you—"

"Not now; there is important work to do. I believe in you; I place my liberty in your

hands, but remember, in return for treachery I can destroy the only evidence of your marriage with Adrian Revere—can deliver you into his hands again. Are you able to walk a short distance?"

"Perfectly so."

"Then come."

He donned his rejected coat, and, supporting her, they retraced the river-path.

She did not draw back as he led her within the darkened old hut. She stood silent as he proceeded again to the outside and returned with an armful of wood and leaves. Throwing them into an old fireplace, he applied a match and the pile ignited.

Its ruddy glow illuminated the interior of the place, making its desolation apparent, but also revealing the gagged and bound form of Torrance on the floor. The woman stared as she recognized him. Then her dark eyes gleamed vindictively.

"Good!" she cried. "You have him, at least!"

She returned the angry glance of the captured outlaw without wavering. Marvin was examining the interior of the place. It had two rooms, the outer one being in the worse condition of the two. Then he examined the bonds of the man on the floor, and drew the woman aside from his hearing with a gesture.

"If it would enhance the opportunity of revenge and aid my plans, would you be willing to remain here a day or more?"

"A week—a month!" responded Arminie, fiercely. "Only let me repay the cowardly purpose of Adrian Revere!"

Marvin looked satisfied. The strong nature of the woman once aroused, he could trust to her firmness and sense of injustice to carry out his projects.

"It is necessary," he continued, "that you should remain here until I return, and that you should guard that man Torrance."

"Fear not; he will not escape me."

"I will soon secure a few articles of furniture for this desolate place. It is isolated, therefore safe for our purpose."

The woman returned to a position near the side of Torrance and seated herself on a broken bench, watching him and the fire with vengeful, reflective eyes in turn.

Thus until the morning the twain occupied the old hut. She arose as the first gray streaks of dawn appeared in the eastern sky, and removed the handkerchief tied around Torrance's mouth.

A perfect torrent of oaths and abuse poured from the villain's lips as he regained the opportunity of speech. He threatened and cajoled her by turns. She seemed to enjoy his words, but betrayed not a single indication of anger at his menaces, or any acquiescence in his offered bribes.

An hour later a wagon driven by Robert Marvin approached the place. He had gone to a town down the river, not venturing to Morris where Torrance's companion might be searching for the missing man, and had come back with numerous articles of furniture and food. Within another hour the interior of the old hut presented quite a homelike appearance.

His cold gray eyes gleamed as he took from a package a pair of linked handcuffs attached to a heavy, long chain. Torrance's face paled, and his eyes fell before the angry glance of the elder Marvin, as he realized that his captor would show no mercy in imprisoning him until he had ascertained the fate of his son.

Marvin cut the bonds securing his feet and then applied the handcuffs to his wrists. He dragged rather than led him into the next apartment, securing the chain with a heavy padlock around a post, and then drew a revolver from his pocket.

"I leave you this man's guardianship when I go," he said impressively to Arminie. "Take this revolver, and if he attempts to escape, shoot him dead."

Escape! The outlaw fairly trembled with impotent rage as he strained at the strong chain when his captors withdrew to the other room. For once he was safely caged, held in thrall by a foe who awarded to him the same treatment he himself had received at his cruel hands.

For a long time Marvin and Arminie Royale conversed in confidential whispers. At last the former arose and took a light stand he had purchased into the apartment occupied by Torrance. The prisoner watched him curiously as he saw his mysterious movements. Marvin had drawn a bench to the table upon which he had placed pens, ink and paper.

"Sit down," he commanded.

Torrance seated himself as ordered.

"Does your fellow-conspirator and assassin, Adrian Revere, know your handwriting?"

"Yes," sullenly acquiesced the prisoner.

"Then take up that pen and write as I dictate. Not one moment of delay or attempt at deception. Your life is in an uncertain balance and I hold it lightly enough to blow your brains out at the slightest provocation."

The crafty mind of Torrance suggested no means of evading this resolute man. Should he attempt to deceive him—whatever his purpose,

or refuse to do his bidding, death certainly would be the result. Trusting to his boldness to escape when he was gone, with a sullen brow he wrote as Marvin dictated, the latter releasing his right hand from the handcuff.

The letter completed was not a long one, but it outlined clearly to Torrance the purpose of his captor. It was addressed to Adrian Revere. It stated that he (Torrance), after carrying out the plans concerning Arminie Royale, had an encounter with the police. They were on his tail, and he, in escaping them, had been nearly drowned. The exposure and cold had almost destroyed his voice and lungs, and he must have

"You must hide me in your house whatever the risk," the letter concluded by saying. "I shall disguise voice and appearance, and even if traced the police could not penetrate my disguise. I will come this evening. I must hide and rest for a few days, for the officers are close on my track."

The letter folded and directed, the handcuff replaced on the wrist of Torrance, and Marvin, with a last threatening look at his prisoner, left the room.

"You are going?" asked Arminie.

"Yes; the time for action has come."

"And will return?"

"In a day or two."

"You are going to my—to that man, Adrian Revere?"

Marvin bowed.

"You seek to arrest him, to drag him down?"

"Do you not agree in that?"

"I agree in anything to repay his treachery," returned the woman, with flashing eyes.

"They say a woman's love can never change. Oh, if you knew the bitterness of revenge in my heart toward my false husband! But, why do you risk placing your life again in his power?"

"I must."

"And why?"

"To secure further proofs of his connection with the Dynamite League—to place surely upon him the guilt of the murder of Hiram Arnold, the banker."

"But my evidence; I know enough—"

"A wife cannot testify against a husband, and your repentance, and aid to me, deserve some better reward than being implicated in his schemes."

"I would suffer the jail to see him punished."

"Let me have my own way," replied Marvin. "There are a few minor points to ascertain, Constance Thorndyke to rescue, and then the police."

He left as he spoke, with a warning to the woman to guard her prisoner closely. Then he stepped into the wagon and drove rapidly away.

It was noon when, after returning the wagon, he secured a vehicle to convey him to Morris. He listened eagerly to the excited conversation of some men discussing the event of the runaway engine of the night previous. They knew the details of the affair, but did not understand the motives.

His heart gave a mighty throb as he heard one man ask:

"And the man in the engine was saved?"

"Yes," was the reply.

And as Robert Marvin stepped aboard the train, bound for New York, his grateful lips murmured fervently:

"Thank Heaven!"

CHAPTER XV.

A BOLD VENTURE.

FOR some moments after the startling revelation Constance Thorndyke had made to Adrian Revere, to the effect that she was aware that her marriage to him—if such an event had really occurred—was invalid, the bold schemer stood dumfounded.

Inadvertently he had tacitly verified her words, and his silence deepened the effect of the exclamation of surprise and rage her unexpected disclosure had wrung from his lips. He recovered himself slowly, but the color had returned to his face, and his eyes glared sneeringly at her, as he said:

"Your knowledge of the woman you name is more startling to me than your insane declaration. How you have learned what you state I cannot imagine, but it avails but little against the direct proofs I hold that you are my wife."

He watched her covertly. He had hoped to incite her to reveal her sources of information. Nothing, however, was further from her thoughts. Instead, she was polite enough, despite her perilous position, to endeavor to learn from her jailer's lips the truth about the pretended marriage.

"You claim me as your wife," she said, calmly, "and you also claim to have the proofs of that statement. I defy you to produce the evidence!"

He was too wily, however, to openly admit the truth.

"You shall know in time," he returned. "Meanwhile I advise you to accept your fate and act in obedience to my rightful claims. I shall wait until to-morrow night. If at that time you are not willing to appear in this house as my wife, I shall remove you to some obscure spot where my dominion will be supreme over you."

"Your wife, villain! coward!" cried Constance.

But her further words were lost, for he abruptly hastened from the apartment.

Constance flew to the window as soon as she was satisfied that he was gone. The broken lattice lay on the ground, but the prostrate form was no longer there. Instead, at the selfsame spot where he had been before nightfall, sat the guardian of her prison. His temporary absence had evidently been taken advantage of by the writer of the mysterious note—the person signing himself Robert Marvin.

Could it be in reality? Were his promises to be relied on? As Constance thought of him being free, she took hope, and then a sudden cloud of despair enveloped her mind as the recollection of the announcement of the death of Willis Marvin came to her distracted thoughts.

Through the long night and the succeeding day the solitude of her apartment was unbroken except for the regular visits of her grim attendant, and she passed the hours in a dreary maze of woe. She could scarcely comprehend that she had loved Marvin so dearly, but as every noble act on his part to assist her was recalled, he became a hero, a memory bitter-sweet, an element withheld from her life which made all other hopes and ambitions seem dead to any reviving influence.

While Constance Thorndyke was thus in doubt as to the promises of Robert Marvin—in grief concerning her dead lover—her captor was not idle. The visit of Willis Marvin had given him intense alarm, and when the young detective escaped him, he waited hourly for a visit from the police. Flight was the last thought in his mind, for he believed himself secure in his position. So long had he relied on Torrance and his emissaries to carry out his plans, that he did not fear more than temporary trouble with the police. They could not connect him with the League, and as for the murder of Hiram Arnold—he shuddered, but he set his lips firmly in that expression which betokened a purpose fully determined to boldly face and oppose accusation if it came.

"Torrance will not be idle," he mused, "and Arminie Royale once out of the way, Willis Marvin will be the next victim. Even if he escapes, he will not dare to move, believing me the husband of Constance Thorndyke; believing also that I hold a secret influence over her fate. As to his father—I never appeared in the League's operations. I am safe. Boldness and deception will carry me through and enable me to retain the Thorndyke estates—to yet secure the casket."

The mystery of the information obtained by Constance Thorndyke, and interposed as a barrier to his claim of marriage, troubled him less when upon searching his secretary he found several papers gone—among them the marriage certificate evidencing his union with Arminie Royale two years before.

"I see it all now," he mused. "Arminie carried out my game reluctantly, but did not fail me in one particular. Becoming jealous lest I should do otherwise than I agreed—marry Constance and then dispose of her—she has helped herself to the marriage certificate and informed Constance of her relation to me to guard against her becoming my wife in reality. Her treachery shall receive its due reward. If she went to Morris, last night, her fate is settled. As for me, if Constance refuses to acknowledge the force of my proofs, I will remove her hence, to where I will fear no interfering hand."

It was shortly before dusk that he received a letter delivered by a messenger boy who did not wait for a reply.

"From Torrance," muttered Revere, with knit brows, as he recognized the handwriting. "I wish he would lay low for a time and not communicate with me, for the detectives may be watching the house. Confusion! he is coming here!"

He arose and paced the floor of the library

as he concluded the perusal of the note exacted from Torrance by Robert Marvin. He had no intention of compromising himself by harboring one of the League under his roof, but the exigency had evidently arrived when Torrance would demand this return of transient security for his past endeavors in the behalf of Revere.

The schemer meditated long and deeply over his projects, and did not leave the library during the evening. It was perhaps ten o'clock when there came a quick ring at the front door bell, and he waited anxiously as he heard a servant go to the door, engage in a few words of conversation in the hall with some visitor, and then hasten to the library.

"What is it?" inquired Revere, opening the door and confronting the servant abruptly.

"A man to see you, sir."

"Who is he?"

"I don't know, but he is roughly dressed and says you'll know him as Morris Le-land."

"Show him in here," said Revere, quickly.

He went to the window and closed the inside blinds and lowered the lamp slightly. He started curiously at the nondescript who was ushered into the apartment by the servant a moment later. It was Torrance, to all appearance, in form, but the face was so heavily bearded, the slouching, assumed gait so foreign to Torrance's manner, that Revere stood puzzled and in doubt, studying the singular make-up of his visitor.

"You got my letter?" demanded the newcomer, in a hoarse whisper.

Revere started at the peculiar tone of his interlocutor and stared at him almost suspiciously.

"Why don't you answer me?" petulantly.

"Because a man's driven to assume this disguise, and has caught a cold from dragging through a river which has nearly been the end of him, you give him as cold a welcome as if it wasn't all for you."

Behind the mask of disguise the false Sidney Torrance was trembling for the success of his imposture; but his words and manner carried it out successfully, for Revere hastened to reply:

"Yes, I got your letter, but your changed appearance startled me."

"Well, let's not talk of it," responded the other, in the same hoarse, strained tone. "I'm dead for rest; can you give me a room for a few days?"

"Yes, follow me; but first, one question."

"What is it?"

"Arminie!"

"We settled her."

"How?"

"The river and chloroform."

"Did you search her?" Revere asked, anxiously.

"For what?"

"She possessed a certain document, a certificate of marriage—"

"No; you said nothing about it."

"I knew nothing of it when I wrote to you."

"If she had any paper it will never be found."

"Why?"

"Because her body has gone over the falls and can never be recovered. Come, it hurts me to talk; show me my room," and the false Torrance coughed and gasped as though dying from a severe congestion of the lungs.

Revere led the way to the corridor, took a lamp from the hall stand, and started up the stairs. As he reached the second floor, he opened a door and led his companion into the room.

"I will say good-night," and Torrance abruptly turned to the bed as if too fatigued to talk further.

Revere was thoughtful as he returned to the library, but he did not suspect the imposture. The letter had paved the way for the deception, and he had fallen into a trap skillfully set by his former victim.

That victim, once alone, showed but little inclination to sleep. Instead, his eyes gleamed actively as he sat down in a listening attitude and communed with himself.

"First to rescue the girl; then to overwhelm Adrian Revere with what I know; to find where his other accomplices are; to ex-

tort a confession from him;—anything to insure his conviction for his crimes."

His hand went quickly up to his head.

"These spells of dizziness," he murmured. "They are becoming alarmingly frequent and confuse my mind. This excitement and my long imprisonment have weakened me. Heaven grant my strength may not fail until I have carried out my trust to my dear old friend, Gerald Thorndyke."

Sitting there waiting for the time to come to act promptly and decisively, he little dreamed of the terrible complications his visit to the roof which sheltered Adrian Revere was destined to bring about, involving the most startling and perilous situation of his eventful life.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TRAMP'S VANTAGE-GROUND.

"SAVED!"

As Dorsett, the detective, spoke the word, he almost fell over against the steel bar which his hands clasped.

On the very verge of the side-track, the terminus of which looked down on a seeming abyss, he had brought the runaway engine to a full stop with a jerk which lifted the iron monster fairly from the track. His face was ghastly white, and his trembling frame and burning hands, bleeding from rough contact with the window of the cab in his wild spring from the station platform told of the terrible ordeal he had experienced.

A throng of men from the station came hurrying excitedly from the spot, but he had released the bonds which held his companion captive before they arrived. He offered no explanation of the affair, but requested that they convey Marvin into the station-house, and, once there, he sat down by his side and waited for his recovery from unconsciousness with an anxious face.

His features were a playground of mingled interest and horror, as finally the Telegraph Detective regained his senses and proceeded to relate his extraordinary adventures. To an outsider they would, however, seem incredible, but already Dorsett had begun to realize that Torrance and his colleagues were the most desperate set of men he had ever dealt with.

"The woman has probably been disposed of," concluded Dorsett; "and this man Torrance and his accomplices will not, of course, remain near the scene of their last crime."

"Then you think it useless to return to Morris?" inquired Marvin.

"Yes."

"We have gained one point at least, despite my terrible experience," and Marvin shuddered at the thought of his late fearful adventure.

"What is that?"

"The knowledge that Constance Thorndyke is safe."

"Evidently for the present, at least."

"As I was struck down by the missile from Torrance's hands, I heard the woman called Arminie Royale cry out that Constance Thorndyke was the victim of a plot, and could she have told more I believe it would have revealed the fact that Constance is not legally or really married to Adrian Revere; and, this being true, have we not sufficient proof against this villain, Revere, to arrest and convict him?"

"No," replied Dorsett, decidedly.

"Why not?"

"Because the confession of some one of his accomplices is necessary to show his hand in all these crimes. Undoubtedly Arminie Royale has become troublesome to him, and he has murdered her or had her murdered. We must not neglect to follow these trails. I will go on to-morrow and endeavor to learn the fate of this woman."

"And I?"

"Must return to New York and watch Adrian Revere and the woman you love."

The station-agent looked curiously at Marvin as he came out from the room where he had been conversing with Dorsett. The latter drew him aside.

"You are doubtless curious to learn the mystery of the runaway engine," he said. "My friend seems to have got into the cab and was unable after it started to stop it."

He vouchsafed no further information on

the subject, but parted with Marvin as an east-bound train came along, the latter continuing his journey to New York city.

He tossed in a restless fever of excitement and suspense upon his bed when he reached home. He was too weak from his recent adventure to start out on the trail of his enemies, but with the next day was again working on the mysterious case.

He removed his quarters during the forenoon and secured and assumed a new disguise, for he feared that if Torrance discovered his escape he or some member of his band would be on his trail.

If he could rescue Constance Thorndyke from Revere's power—if he could even be positively assured that she had not been entrapped into a marriage, he would have secured the arrest of Revere at once, despite Dorsett's advice to the contrary. If it was to be the same game of hide-and-seek over again, however, he would proceed less boldly than before and under circumstances where he could keep the house under a longer surveillance.

Trusting to disguise to carry out his assumption, he secured a suit of the roughest, coarsest clothes he could find, and donning them, wandered carelessly through the alleyway in the rear of the Thorndyke mansion. Either Revere kept a costly retinue of servants, or else he had several members of the League with him, for two men were busy in the stable, and a third occupied a comfortable position on a bench in the garden.

Approaching one of these, Marvin affected the slouching ways and hungry glance of the habitual tramp.

"You couldn't give a man a bite to eat, could ye?" he asked.

The man pointed to the kitchen.

"Go yonder," he said, "and I guess they'll spare you a meal."

The cook placed a lavish supply of food before him, and while he sat on the stone steps eating it with an apparently ravenous appetite, the man on the bench arose, knocked the ashes from his pipe, and approached him with a speculative look in his eyes.

"A stranger here?" he asked.

Marvin nodded assentingly between huge bites at the food in his hand.

"From the West?"

"Yes. Could you give me a job of work?" inquired the disguised detective, eagerly. "Anything to get food and shelter till I can turn myself."

"Mebbe I can, if you'd sleep in the stables. You see the garden here?"

"Yes."

"It ain't much of a garden, but the weeds out it would look better. Just go to work at it and don't leave here till I come back; and, by the way, keep your eye on yonder window," he said, pointing to a room in the upper story of the structure. "If you see any movement at the blinds from within, just go to the cook and tell her."

"All right," and Marvin proceeded to the flower patch as directed.

His heart beat exultantly as he realized how easily he had secured a foothold under the very roof of the man he so desired to be near, and he fairly trembled with excitement as he imagined that the reason the warning had been given him to watch the window was because some person was imprisoned there—probably Constance Thorndyke herself!

He thrilled at the thought. Oh, if he could but let her know that he was so near to her—if, in any way, he could convey a message to her! But he dared do nothing boldly, much less venture to alarm the suspicions of those about him by any attempted signal.

"Patience," he whispered to his anxious heart; "with darkness I can operate less cautiously and more securely."

Frequently he glanced up at the window, during his task, but no signs of life were visible within the apartment. He was disappointed when shortly after nightfall the man he had relieved returned, commended him for his work, told the cook to give him his supper, and then directed him to the loft of the stable for rest and shelter for the night.

He could do nothing less than obey mutely, unless he wished to excite suspicion, so he was soon in the loft of the stable, meditating over his situation.

A small three-cornered window in that

part of the loft where he was, looked out upon the grounds and rear of the house. As he peered from it he was soon enabled to perceive many things of importance in his quest.

First, his attention was enchained by the man on the bench. Why did that individual continue to occupy that special place, always smoking indolently, always facing the house? Doubtless because he was watching the room he himself had been directed to observe! As he decided that such was the man's purpose—that the surveillance would probably be kept up all night, the Telegraph Detective grew gloomy, but he soon became startlingly interested as he lifted his eyes to the rear of the house.

Two apartments, one below the other, were lighted from the interior. In the upper one he saw plainly, through one half-opened shutter, a female form starting from a couch—saw the shadow of a man enter the room, and his heart beat wildly as he thought in that quick glance at the woman as she passed within the radius of vision that it must be Constance Thorndyke.

But as his eyes fell on the window of the apartment below, his excitement grew to a startled amazement. The upper portion of the inside blinds alone were open. From the ground the occupant of the apartment could not be seen, but from Marvin's place of espionage, directly opposite, he could look down and in upon the form of a man just arising from a chair. He had sprung to the door and bent his head to listen to some sound in the hall without. He carried in his hand a false beard which, a moment later, he arranged upon his face, but ere he did so, the light shining full upon his natural features caused Willis Marvin to fall back with a cry of joy and bewilderment.

After many weary months of separation two men, with identical interests at stake, were thus singularly thrown together within a few yards of each other! The one ignorant of the fact that they were reunited, if yet separated. The white, care-worn face, the troubled but searching eyes, revealed unmistakably a beloved identity to the amazed watcher, and from the lips of the Telegraph Detective broke the murmured agitated words:

"Merciful Heavens, my father!"

CHAPTER XVII.

LUCIFER'S TRIUMPH.

A most singular combination had been brought about by the development of the operations of the Dynamite League, centralized now under the very roof where the first steps in the tragedy had been taken.

Within the grounds of the Irving Place house were the principal actors in the exciting drama under process of consummation—Robert Marvin and his son, Adrian Revere and Constance Thorndyke. The false heir to the Thorndyke estate was now about to make a bold strike for his interests, little dreaming that his tireless enemies were close upon his trail.

Believing the pretended Torrance safe in the apartment to which he had been assigned, Revere determined to move at once, after a long reflection upon his course; therefore he had taken a lamp in his hand and gone up the stairs. It was his shadow which Willis Marvin saw from his place of observation in the stable loft, and it was Constance Thorndyke, alarmed at his appearance, who had arisen to her feet as Revere intruded into her presence.

But, cautiously as Adrian Revere had ascended the stairs, as he passed the door of the room where the fictitious Torrance was, the man within was on the alert. His feigned exhaustion was gone, and as his quick ear recognized the step without, he replaced his disguise, temporarily abandoned for comfort's sake, and unlocked and opened the door softly, glancing after the form of Revere.

"He has gone to see the girl," he murmured, his eyes gleaming excitedly. "I will venture to follow him."

And a moment later he was in the upper hall watching and listening in an embrasure in the wall near the door of Constance Thorndyke's room which Revere had just entered, and there awaited developments before deciding what course to pursue.

The maiden's face was pale, her hair disheveled, her whole appearance telling of her wretched vigil of distress and anxiety. But she was still the brave, defiant soul of the wronged daughter and heiress, and confronted her tormentor unflinchingly.

"This farce of battle under one roof, between husband and wife, must cease," he said, authoritatively.

"Husband and wife!" she found words to repeat the insinuation with a scornful curl of her lips.

"You still dare deny it?" demanded Revere, angrily.

"I dare disbelieve it," she retorted, glancing at his anger-flushed face defiantly.

"Outsiders will not, Constance Revere! Oh, you need not shudder at the name; it is yours rightfully, and now it is either war or peace between us."

"Then let it be war!" cried the girl, passionately—"for your acknowledged wife I will never be."

"Perhaps you will change your mind," replied Revere. "I have in my possession a duly attested certificate of marriage and the evidence of witnesses to the ceremony that you wedded me."

"Then I was drugged or unconscious when you enacted the fraud," asserted Constance, bitterly.

"Perhaps; but that does not alter the fact that you and your friends are completely in my power. What I can prove is that you are my wife—that you were wedded to me in apparent sincerity; your story or my reputation will cut no figure in annulling that sacred contract. I hoped to win your love; I see it is impossible. There are two motives in my action—love and money. I may relinquish the former, but the latter, never!"

She understood him now. His sordid nature craved money, and she experienced a gleam of hope as she believed that he would accept the compromise of wealth, if in her power to bestow it.

"I am seriously involved," he continued, "and *must* have money. You have none, but you can at your will call from concealment Robert Marvin, the man who has the casket left by your father for you."

She did not reply, but listened to his excited words.

"Since you affect scorn for my love," he continued, "let us compromise on a ransom. Oh! I am sordid—selfish if you will," he added, noticing her scornful face—"anything to carry out my purposes. Promise to act as I desire in securing this casket and I will release you from the marriage contract."

"Never!" exclaimed Constance, firmly. "My hand will never be employed to bring back into your power the man you have so persecuted. I defy you to do your worst, Adrian Revere! You are not my husband; your only power over me is the power which the jailer exercises over a prisoner. I refuse to treat with you. Harm me at your peril! Announce our marriage publicly, and I will disprove your every assertion."

"By your insane ideas concerning Arminie Royale, I suppose?" sneered Revere.

"It matters not. You deny that she is your wife, but your false face gives the lie to your denial."

"Even if true I defy you to find her, or one single proof that she was aught but a favorite with me. I am no trifler when I lay my snares. If Arminie Royale was ever wedded to me, her death annuls that contract, for she is dead and the proofs of my relation toward her were destroyed with her death."

The girl started back, alarm depicted on her white face as she realized the depth of villainy and depravity of this man's nature.

"Arminie Royale dead—murdered by you, or at your instigation—" she began.

"No! she is *not* dead, and the proofs of her marriage to Adrian Revere are *not* destroyed."

The villain recoiled in alarm, and Constance Thorndyke was amazed as the words broke upon her hearing, for the door had admitted a stranger into the apartment.

"Torrance! How came you here?" demanded Revere, angrily, as he recognized his guest.

"I came to right a wrong, to unmask you, villain and murderer that you are!"

His eyes flashing with concentrated rage and indignation, the simulated Torrance advanced toward Revere. The scoundrel recognized the change in voice and manner of his guest and dimly foresaw a new menace, realizing vaguely that he had been made the victim of an imposture.

"You are not Torrance!" he cried.

"No! I am your victim of the past, your avenger, now!"

"Great heavens! *It is Robert Marvin!*"

The words broke like a scream of agony from the villain's bloodless lips, as the false Torrance stood revealed in his true identity, the beard torn from his face.

"Ay! Adrian Revere; you recognize me now. Surrounded by your emissaries in the flush of your iniquity and success, you are in my power. You thought to deceive this poor girl with your cowardly lies, but you reckoned without knowing the truth, for your legal wife, Arminie Royale, was *not* murdered by the men you hired, but is now alive, burning with desperate desire for vengeance for your cowardly treachery, and in her power is the man you have so relied on, a close prisoner—Sidney Torrance, the leader of that iniquitous band of assassins, the Dynamite League."

Every word was rendered with the vehemence of an accusing spirit. Even as he spoke, Robert Marvin seemed as if about to spring upon the man who had so cruelly wronged him, and strangle him then and there.

"The latter, choking with terror and amazement at the startling revelations of his enemy, could only murmur:

"It cannot be!"

"You will soon learn the truth, Adrian Revere," returned Marvin. "As to your claim on the hand and fortune of this persecuted girl," and his eyes wandered tenderly to the bewildered Constance—"let this disprove all your base assertions."

He had drawn from his pocket a yellow, time-worn paper. Revere's colorless lips broke into a cry of new alarm as he recognized the document—the marriage-certificate stolen from his secretary, evidencing his relation to the woman, Arminie Royale, whom he supposed dead.

It nerved him to so sudden a reaction from overwhelming surprise that his quick movement took Marvin completely off his guard.

"You shall not triumph!" he yelled, in tones like those of an infuriated madman. "Help! help! help!"

As he screamed the words loudly, he threw himself bodily upon Marvin. The latter was armed, but before he could recover from the shock of the encounter, and draw a weapon, Revere had borne him down to the floor and held his struggling form in the close embrace of desperation.

Hurrying footsteps echoed on the stairway: there was a quick rush along the little corridor, and two men, alarmed by their master's cry, dashed into the room.

"Secure this man!" panted Revere, as the men approached him. "Your victory is not yet assured," he cried, with a malignant glance at the terrified Constance. "Another of your meddling friends shall pay the forfeit of his boldness."

But, she had eyes only for Robert Marvin. The hirelings had seized him, but it required all their united strength to prevent him from breaking from their grasp and rushing upon the crime-stained man he so hated.

Over the white, care-traversed face had come a sickly yellow hue; into the unnatural gleaming eyes a maniacal light, while his voice rung out in fierce, incoherent maledictions against his enemy, Adrian Revere.

"Great heavens, he is insane!" moaned Constance, sinking to a chair and covering her face with her hands.

Revere had followed the men out into the hallway as they bore their struggling burden down the stairs.

"I will leave the house with the girl at once," he muttered, "but first must dispose of this maniac."

"What shall we do with him?" inquired one of the men, as they reached the lower floor.

In reply, Revere went to a corner of the hallway and lifted a trap in the floor.

He spoke no word, but they understood him fully; they lifted their captive over the

trap, then flung Marvin down into the black darkness of the place.

They heard his wild ravings, and as they closed the trap-door, the picture of his glaring eyes and white face seemed framed in the dark aperture, but they also knew that he was secure from escape, believing the low muttered words of Revere:

"He is doomed!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE TRAIL.

WITH all the diligence of the skilled detective, Dorsett lost no time in reaching Morris after his companion had taken the train for New York city. He found the little village in a turmoil of excitement over the mystery of the runaway engine, especially in the vicinity of the station, but was enabled to secure no evidence concerning the struggle near the engine in which Torrance, his accomplices, the Telegraph Detective and Arminie Royale had taken a part.

It was broad daylight when he concluded that the following up of the matter would result only in the finding of the body of the woman in some lonely spot in the vicinity, the assassins having flown to the city to lose themselves from the possibility of recognition.

It was well on toward evening when he struck a trail which he believed might lead to further developments. A boat containing a woman's shawl—the same which Robert Marvin had unconsciously allowed to drift down the river after rescuing the French woman—had been found in the stream. From this point he proceeded up the stream, looking out for marks of a struggle or traces of human beings in the evidently unfrequented locality.

He finally paused at the spot where Robert Marvin had laid Arminie on the grass. The handkerchief used by the villains to chloroform the woman had been left behind, thus affording Dorsett new evidence that the crime was there committed, if such had occurred.

Easily tracing the footsteps of the man and woman through the damp loam, they led him from the river to within sight of the old cabin which Marvin had left less than an hour before.

He approached the old structure cautiously to hear the echo of voices conversing within, and caught the name of Torrance, and he recognized a woman's voice.

No one greeted his sight as he peered into the front room; then he advanced boldly into the rear room. His footsteps alarmed Arminie Royale, who at that moment was taunting her prisoner, and making his galling incarceration as miserable as possible.

She started back as she came to the door. "A stranger!" she cried, in alarm, but coming forward, closed the door after her.

The detective glanced at her suspiciously. To him Arminie Royale was as much a stranger as Constance Thorndyke, but somehow, in a manner he could not account for, his mind decided that she was connected with the mystery of the river.

"Do you live here?" he asked, scarcely knowing what to say.

She knew not if he was some emissary of the League unknown to her, an officer, or a casual traveler, but his dress and city ways informed her that he was not a resident of the vicinity.

"Yes," she replied, boldly fixing her dark eyes upon him with a look evidencing displeasure at his intrusion. "What do you want?"

"Do you live here alone?"

Her eyes flashed at his persistency.

"Why do you ask?" she demanded.

"Because I am looking for a man I believe to be in this neighborhood."

"What is his name?"

"Sidney Torrance!"

He watched her narrowly as he spoke and detected the quick start his words caused her to make.

"I know of no such person," she said.

"Who is in that other room?"

He advanced a step as if to see for himself. Arminie Royale's hand stole to her pocket, and the next moment a revolver gleamed before the astonished detective.

"Stand back!" she cried, with flashing eyes.

He retreated a step or two before the menace of her determined manner and the leveled weapon.

"If you have any business here state it," she continued, emphatically, "but do not intrude where you have no right to do so."

"I have a right."

As he spoke Dorsett turned back the corner of his vest and revealed the edge of an official badge, and said simply:

"I am a detective."

Arminie Royale's face grew pale as she lowered the weapon. A mystified perplexity came into her eyes and she offered no interference as Dorsett advanced and pushed open the door communicating with the next apartment and glanced in.

A low cry of amazement broke from his lips at the sight which greeted his vision—the fierce-eyed Torrance chained and manacled, an unusual spectacle in an unusual place.

He turned to Arminie Royale.

"Who is this man?" he demanded, imperatively.

A derisive laugh amazed him as it broke from the woman's lips.

"What!" she cried; "in search of a man and don't know him? That man is Sidney Torrance!"

A satisfied gleam came into the detective's face.

"And you?" he asked, quickly.

"She is Arminie Royale. Come, don't give us any nonsense. If you're a detective, take us in—anything to get out of this accursed place!" growled Torrance, viciously.

Arminie Royale! Dorsett turned to the woman.

"Then you were not drowned?—then the League did not succeed in killing you?"

The shrewd Frenchwoman saw that the stranger, whoever he was, had some knowledge of the occurrences of the past night. She touched his arm and beckoned to him to follow her out of the hearing of the prisoner.

On the outside of the house she paused and turned her searching glance full upon him.

"Who are you?" she asked, abruptly.

"I have told you once—a detective."

"From New York?"

"Yes."

"How much do you know of this affair?"

"Of what affair?"

"Of Sidney Torrance—of this mystery. If you are from New York, answer me one question truly, and I will explain what seems a mystery to both of us: Did you come here with another detective?"

"Yes."

"His name?"

"Willis Marvin."

The woman's somber face grew clear and her eyes bright.

"Then I can trust you," she said. "I was rescued last night by the man who captured this Torrance. I am here now, his jailer, under the direction of that man, Robert Marvin."

"Robert Marvin! Impossible!" cried Dorsett, in the profoundest amazement.

"What I say is true."

"And he—Marvin—where has he gone?"

"I cannot tell you his secrets."

The detective looked annoyed.

"But I am his friend," he began—

"I cannot help it," returned the woman, resolutely. "There are complications in this affair I have no right to disturb. Robert Marvin will return here soon. If you would see him and learn his plans, do so from his own lips. I you doubt me, arrest both Torrance and myself."

The detective's face was a study in its puzzled expression.

"Are you telling me the truth?" he asked, earnestly.

"Do not appearances carry out my statements?" was the questioning reply.

They certainly did. The detective was silent for a few moments. Finally he spoke:

"Why should you be a friend to Robert Marvin, when you were an accomplice of his enemies only a day since?"

The Frenchwoman's eyes flashed darkly.

"Because those accomplices have dealt me treachery for sincerity, attempted death for fidelity to their interests," she replied, forcibly.

"Will you wait here, and not fly, alarmed at my appearance, until I return?" inquired Dorsett.

"Why should I fly?" demanded Arminie, calmly. "I have nothing to fear. I am in Robert Marvin's hands, and he has promised me my revenge. It is all I ask."

Apparently satisfied, the detective turned to the road and hastened toward Morris. His intention was to notify Willis Marvin by telegraph of the discovery he had made.

The woman watched his figure disappear; then, turning, re-entered the hut.

She glanced carelessly at the prisoner, at his anxious face and restless hands, and then broke into a light laugh.

He glared at her savagely.

"You seem amused!"

"I am," she replied, sinking into a chair; "I am amused to see how perfectly fate is avenging me, and I comparatively inactive to assist its movements."

"You talk in riddles."

"They seem clear enough to me. You and that demon, Revere, in rewarding a trusting woman's fidelity with treachery, have simply brought ruin on all your plans. I would not lift a finger to save either of you, and it begins to look as if even that action on my part, willingly bestowed, would prove unavailing to aid you."

The prisoner seemed tortured by her stinging words and reckless manner.

"What do you mean?" he demanded, hoarsely.

"I mean that not only are you in the power of a personal foe, but also in that of the law itself. The man who just left here will relieve my watch, and, as a detective, take you in charge."

The muttered curses of Torrance told how galling was the restraint imposed upon him.

Both were silent for a few moments, a silence broken suddenly by a harsh laugh from Torrance.

"Arminie Royale," said the prisoner, "you believe yourself a very shrewd woman. I have just decided that you are quite the contrary."

"Indeed!" scornfully.

"Yes. Has it occurred to you that all men are alike, and look only at their own personal interests? Have you meditated on the fact that this man, Marvin, is simply using you to further his own ends—has led you into this trap, and that the detective will return and arrest us both?"

"I believe his visit here to be purely accidental," she replied.

"Then disabuse your mind of that thought. Robert Marvin sent him here, and your fancied revenge on Adrian Revere will never come. It was his game to play innocent, and he has taken you in. Ha, ha!"

He had worked successfully on the woman's feelings at last; he had set her thinking over the situation—of herself a prisoner, and Adrian Revere clear of the law.

"Shall I tell you a secret?" he continued, in the same taunting tone.

She eyed him angrily.

"You have none worth the imparting," she replied, indignant at his power to annoy her.

"Haven't I? Bend close a moment, and let me whisper, that Adrian Revere—"

She drew close to him and bent her ear eagerly, believing he was about to tell her some secret of importance, but only to have his hands, manacled as they were, seize her throat in a close embrace. Drawing her head down and closing his knees over her arms and body, he held her completely at his mercy.

"Fool!" he hissed, as he tightened his grasp; "whether I escape or not, the satisfaction of choking the life out of you is worth the gallows. You were shrewd, my friend Arminie, but you cannot cope with your superior in *finesse* and strength."

He relaxed his hold as the startled eyes closed and the purple lips became motionless. Handicapped as he was, he drew the revolver from her pocket, and laughed wildly as he noted the deep impress of his brutal grasp on the fair white throat.

But he grew furious as he searched in vain for the key to the handcuffs and the padlock fastening the chain. His frequent endeavors to escape told him that he could not force the chain before Dorsett would return, as there were no tools to effect his purpose

within reach. Marvin had not trusted Arminie Royale too far, and had taken the key to the padlock with him.

He glanced down at the revolver in his hands and observed that the seven chambers were loaded. A hopeful light came into his eyes. Approaching the post where the chain was secured, he placed the barrel of the weapon against the padlock and fired, to have the satisfaction of seeing the outer plate of the padlock completely shattered. A second bullet and the chain fell to the floor, and drawing it through the loop in the handcuffs, he was free to leave the place!

He paused, his fingers on the revolver as he started with a wild dash for the door, and glanced down at the insensible Arminie.

"Shall I end her once for all?" he muttered. "No; she is dangerous, but this is a case where the crime would be traced directly to me, and I won't halter my neck. I'll hurry to Revere, get him to leave the city and divide the plunder, but first some smithy to relieve me of these handcuffs."

He glided from the place and sought the shelter of the forest to the north, away from Morris.

Half an hour later Arminie Royale recovered her consciousness. Slowly the truth dawned upon her mind; slowly she recalled the revenge of Torrance and realized that he had escaped.

Why should she remain here in doubt as to Dorsett while Torrance might reach New York and warn Revere ere she had an opportunity for revenge?

"I will not lose that chance!" she hissed through her swollen lips. "Let Robert Marvin pursue his own course, I mine; but Adrian Revere shall not escape a wronged wife's vengeance."

Silence brooded over the little cabin vacated by its former tenants, and darkness had settled down over the solemn landscape when, about nine o'clock, Dorsett returned from Morris.

He was startled as he found the outer room deserted, and hastened to the inner apartment with an anxious face.

"The man escaped, the woman gone!" he cried. "What does it mean? Is she false or true? What are these new complications?"

CHAPTER XIX.

A MADMAN'S ACT.

A MAN chained to a pillar, and seeing the home containing his loved ones in peril of destruction which he is unable to avert, would experience the same emotions which tortured Willis Marvin, the Telegraph Detective, as he gazed from the windows of his place of covert, watching the scene in the apartment occupied by Constance Thorndyke.

From the moment he had seen his father in the room below, he had at once recognized the fact that Robert Marvin was playing a game as deep as his own. As he saw him glide from the apartment, he knew that he was bent on some errand, having for its purpose the outwitting of Revere and the rescue of Constance Thorndyke. His attention was therefore centered on the upper room, and through the shutters he could discern, from the shadows and occasional proximity of one of the two occupants of the place to the window, that an exciting drama was in progress of operation.

In terrible suspense he tried to judge what was going on within the room.

It was only when he plainly distinguished Adrian Revere's voice calling loudly for help that he realized that the tragic culmination to the exciting scene had come.

He was unable to endure the suspense longer. A mystery, perhaps a murder, vital to all the issues of the case before him, was hidden by the walls of the Thorndyke mansion, and he must learn what fateful part his father and Constance had enacted in a scene, evidently one of violence, judging from the cries of Adrian Revere.

Leaving the window he groped about the darkened stable-loft and reached the loose rail stairway leading below, his heart beating anxiously, his brain in a whirl. He scarcely knew how to act, but he had determined to be passive no longer, to move

boldly and ascertain his father's fate and that of the woman he loved. He was about to descend to the main floor of the stable when he saw the door leading to the garden open and two forms, dimly outlined in the darkness, enter.

He recognized the voice of Revere, speaking in quick, excited accents:

"Light the lantern!"

A match was scratched, and the man who had been watching in the garden entered the stable and lighted a lantern. Its rays illuminated the place, and revealed the pale face, gleaming eyes and disarranged apparel of Revere.

"Wake up the driver!" ordered the latter, "and have him harness the horses to the carriage at once."

He stood, uneasy, until his companion, going into an apartment off the main stable, returned with the driver, who revived to full wakefulness as he caught sight of Revere.

"Get the carriage ready at once," commanded Revere, sharply, "and drive to the front of the house. You"—to the watchman in the garden—"leave your post; the girl won't attempt to escape now; and go with him to the front of the house. When I get ready to leave, come back here, get the keys to the cellar and go there."

The man stared curiously at Revere.

"There is some one to attend to?" he asked, significantly.

"Yes, and see that he's settled. A cool thousand awaits the announcement that the man I have just thrown there is dead."

In his excitement he spoke plainly, horrifying Marvin at his deliberate villainy, but the watchman in the garden seemed familiar with evil work, for he replied:

"I'll attend to it; never fear. Where are the keys?"

The driver jerked his head over his shoulder in the direction of his sleeping apartment.

"All right!" and Revere left the stable for the house, while the two men hastily began to get the horses and carriage ready.

Marvin was enduring a slow agony of torture and suspense as the men proceeded about their work. He saw that Adrian Revere had determined to remove Constance Thorndyke to some other place, and he also realized that his father was, in all probability, the prisoner alluded to in the cellar of the old mansion.

As the two men drove the carriage from the place, he leaped through the opening of the loft to the floor, and, seizing the lantern, ran toward the apartment occupied by the driver.

He glanced around eagerly, and a cry of satisfaction escaped his lips as he caught sight of a bunch of keys hanging from a nail near a window. Seizing them he extinguished the lantern, but keeping it still in his hand stole to the stable door communicating with the yard and glanced anxiously at the rear portion of the house.

There was a light, and persons moving in the kitchen, but he ventured to steal across the garden intervening between the stable and the house. Four stone steps led down a little area to a heavy oaken door, and with trembling hands he began to apply the keys from the bunch in his hand to the rusted lock.

At last he found a key that fitted. It turned; the door opened, and he stepped within the damp, dark cellar, the door closing after him with a sharp snap in its long-unused lock.

He endeavored to glance around him, but the darkness was intense; no ray of light penetrated the place. He could not discover his father, perhaps insensible in some dark corner of the cellar, so he opened the lantern in his hand and lit a match just as a kind of murmur greeted his ears.

He held the lighted lantern high over his head and glanced quickly around him. The rays deeply illuminated the place, but he advanced with wildly beating heart as he caught sight of a form seated on the hard stone floor of the cellar, leaning on one hand and glaring at the approaching light with such eyes as only a madman possesses, and, too, with a madman's wild, incoherent mutterings.

Around him lay several kegs and packages, while the dark background, the damp stone

walls, formed a frame to a picture which impressed the detective terribly.

"Father!"

He hastened to the man's side and placed the lantern on the ground. Love, tenderness, respect, all the joy of a long-awaited-for reunion, all the agony of a heart torn to pity for his forlorn condition were drawn to the highest pitch of interest in Willis Marvin's heart, as he threw himself on the neck of his parent.

There was a wild cry of rage, a sudden spring—so sudden that it flung the eager son back, his head striking the stone floor of the cellar, and driving sensibility temporarily from his brain.

"I know you!" cried Robert Marvin. "You are Torrance come to taunt me. The old place. Ha! I remember it! The cellar where you first placed me, and, too, the same casks of powder—powder—powder!"

It had come at last! The tortured mind of the victim of the Dynamite League under the terrible strain of long imprisonment and recent excitement, augmented by the fall into the cellar, had given way. The dazed brain was unable to cope with the aggregations of the hour, and, for the time being, at least, Robert Marvin was a maniac.

He paid no further attention to the prostrate figure on the floor. His eyes gleamed like two coals of fire, and were fixed on the nearest kegs of powder. With a scream of insane delight he seized one of the casks and lifted it high over his head, throwing it down with crushing force on the edge of another.

The frail head gave way, and the dark grains of powder poured out in a black stream on the floor. He capered over it in glee, dragging the other barrels to the spot and piled them high over the scattered explosive.

Keeping up a wild muttering, his hands went searching his clothing as if for some object he desired, and as he drew from his pocket a folded paper he twisted it into a cone and placed it among the powder, surrounding its base with the dark grains, until it sustained an upright position.

Fateful hour of misfortune incalculable of a friend to Constance Thorndyke destined to be her deadliest foe at this moment, for the piece of paper was the stolen marriage certificate of Adrian Revere and Arminie Royale forgotten, amid his excitement, by the villain who, in dooming his victim to a violent death, stood himself over a mine which, fired at a madman's caprice, might end all his evil schemes in a moment of time.

Willis Marvin, his sensibility returning, moved, moaned and gained his feet unperceived by his father. His exclamation of horror alarmed the maniac, and told the detective that he was discovered.

For the sight which met Willis Marvin's eyes was one calculated to make the strongest heart quail. His father had removed the candle from the lantern, had ignited the piece of paper, and stood gleefully fanning the flame every moment coming nearer to the black grains with a mocking laugh of joy.

"Their own means of destroying others shall destroy them in turn!" he cried. "Ha! Torrance again!" he screamed, as he caught sight of his son rushing to seize the burning fuse.

His arms encircling the detective's form with insane strength, he dragged him back toward the rear of the cellar. "You shall die with me!" he cried. "You shall see all your confederates blown to pieces, building and all."

Struggling wildly, his eyes horrified as he saw the piece of paper splutter and burn nearer, nearer to the fatal powder, Willis Marvin, as he found he could not overpower the man, as he found his ears deaf to the appealing cry of "Father"—staggered back against the rear wall, held firmly by the other.

"The door!" murmured the detective, as his free hand went over its surface.

A groan deep and awful escaped his lips as he found no knob or interior latch.

Horrors! in full sight of the deadly blast, held at a madman's mercy, he realized that the door had a spring-lock—that in no manner could he hope to escape the terrible doom which threatened him.

For the door was locked from the outside!

CHAPTER XX.

AFTER THE ACT.

WILLIS MARVIN closed his eyes with a groan as he realized the situation. Held firmly against the door of the cellar by his insane father, he only awaited the death which seemed inevitable.

The glamour of delirium only seemed to intensify the glee of the maniac. He forgot personal peril and awaited the expected explosion with wild delight.

At that very moment, braced against the door, Willis Marvin felt a movement which thrilled his heart with wild suspense. Footsteps hurriedly descended the stone area, from without; he could hear the sound of a key in the lock; then a violent push sent the door inward, throwing father and son to the ground with a crash.

Even amid his peril and excitement the Telegraph Detective knew that speedy action might yet save them both. As they went down his father's grasp was released as he fell beyond him. One glance at the slowly burning paper, one spring toward his prostrate father, and imbued with giant strength amid the terrible exigency of the occasion, Willis Marvin seized his father's form and sprung with it through the doorway, past the startled accomplice of Revere, who, returning from the carriage and unable to find the keys in the stable, had come to the cellar door, and finding the keys there, had unlocked it just in time to enable the escape of the victim.

"Stop!" he cried, as he caught Marvin by the arm. "What are you doing here?"

"Fool! fly for your life!" cried the detective, excitedly. "See the powder there!"

The warning was enough, for he too sprung away with a cry, while the detective, bearing the struggling form, dashed through the now open stable doors and gained the alleyway just as a deafening explosion flung himself and his burden violently to the ground.

For a moment the air was thick with fire and smoke and crashing timbers and masonry. Then a ruddy glare shot athwart the dark sky, and he knew that the building was in flames.

Staggering down the alleyway, forcing his father to accompany him, fearing that he might be pursued and recaptured, the detective never paused until he reached a street near by. He signaled to a carriage driving by, ordering the driver to convey him to his new quarters, while mind and body were occupied in compelling his father to remain in his seat in the vehicle.

It required the assistance of the driver to get Robert Marvin to his son's apartment, and once there the detective was at a loss how to control the maniac. He directed the driver to go for a physician, and when, half an hour later, the doctor arrived, explained the situation without giving the details to him.

"I esteem the patient's violence more the result of excited delirium than insanity," said the doctor, gravely. "He must have been subjected to some terrible mental strain quite recently."

"He has," replied the detective. "Can you administer some sedative that will quiet him, as, in his present condition, I dare not leave him alone?"

The physician nodded assentingly, left the place, and Marvin dismissed the driver. When the former returned from the near-by drug store, he brought and administered some medicine with no little difficulty to Robert Marvin, and assuring the detective that he would send him a male nurse, as he desired, the physician left the place, promising to call the following day.

It was an hour later when the nurse—a brawny, hard-muscled fellow, used to violent patients—entered the room. Robert Marvin had subsided under the influence of the sedative.

They made him quite comfortable, and the detective had given the nurse instructions as to watching his patient carefully, when his cheek blanched to the whiteness of marble.

"Oh, merciful heavens!" he cried in a tone of wild anguish. "My distressed heart, engrossed with my father, has forgotten the fate of Constance Thorndyke."

Constance! He started from the room without a word of explanation to the astonished attendant, bitterly reproaching himself

for not pausing at the very instant of danger to endeavor to save Constance Thorndyke from the flames.

His feet seemed winged as he flew toward Irving Place. The street was crowded, and the fire-engines were still playing on the smoking ruins of the old mansion. No one seemed to know how the accident had occurred. Not one of the servants or residents of the house had been found, nor yet any traces of the victims to the disaster been discovered.

Marvin's heart was a dead weight in his bosom, as he saw the utter wreck and ruin wrought. It seemed impossible that any of the occupants of the house could have escaped, and he had wandered to the stable, and a low moan of agony escaped his lips as he gazed at the debris of the beautiful structure.

But at that moment he started. Emerging from the stable was a form he recognized—the watchman in the garden.

He overtook him as he was leaving the alleyway. The man turned, recognized him with a curse, and shook off his hand angrily, with the query:

"What do you want?"

"I want to talk with you," replied Marvin, sternly, "and you will do well to stop and listen."

The other stared at him doubtingly. Evidently, as he recalled the episode of the cellar, he dimly suspected the tramp was not what he pretended to be.

"Well, what is it?" he asked, crossly.

"How many were killed in the building?"

"None."

A mighty throb of joy filled the heart of the detective.

"None?" he cried. "Are you sure?"

"Certain! Whoever you are, I thank you for warning me, but it's a mystery to me how you came to be in the basement."

"Never mind that now," replied Marvin. "How did the servants escape?"

"There were only three in the house—the cook and two men. The back part of the house blew up and they were in the front, and ran out in time to escape the fire. The driver, of course, was not hurt. He was driving the master away—"

"And the woman with him?" ventured Marvin, eagerly.

"Yes; bridegroom and bride managed to escape just in time."

"Where have they gone?"

"I don't know for sure; but the man you carried out—where is he?"

"Out of the way there, or you'll get run over!"

The interruption came from the hoarse throat of a horse-cart driver, as the vehicle, dashing through the alleyway, divided the crowd right and left. Marvin, separated from his companion looked in vain for him again after the excitement had subsided, but a deep thankfulness filled his mind as he turned to leave the place, deciding that his attention was now due to his father, and trusting to the future to reveal the new prison-place of Constance Thorndyke.

He was unaware that the watchman had seen him after the episode of the horse-cart. His question to Marvin concerning the escaped prisoner had revived in his mind the thousand-dollar reward offered by Adrian Revere for proofs of the death of Robert Marvin. He now knew that the tramp was an impostor; so, tracking him to his residence, he caught sight of the interior of the apartment and the patient; then he hastened away, determined to see Revere.

Until morning dawned the detective sat by his father's side. The patient was more quiet now, but the son's solicitude was deep for his suffering father as he saw how wan and sunken were his features; and all his bitter hatred of Revere and his League returned as he recalled how much that parent had endured through them, for his fidelity to the interests of Gerald Thorndyke.

It was late in the afternoon when a telegraph message was delivered at the door of his room. It had gone to his former rooms, but by instructions he had left had been sent to his new quarters.

He tore it open and was not a little startled at its contents. It was dated at Morris, an hour earlier, and ran:

"Come at once to Morris; I have cornered Torrance and the girl."

And the name signed was that of Dorsett, the detective.

CHAPTER XXI.

NOT BAFFLED BY DEFEAT.

CONSTANCE THORNDYKE had indeed escaped the results of Robert Marvin's insane act. She had been compelled to leave the house by Adrian Revere, and was led to a close carriage in waiting in front of the residence.

"It will be useless for you to make an alarm," he said, warningly. "If you succeed in attracting attention by any ruse, with the influence at my command I shall instantly avert all interference."

And recognizing the futility of struggle, Constance had sunk back upon the seat, while she was whirled rapidly away from the Thorndyke mansion.

Her companion started violently and looked back in some alarm as he heard an explosion, and soon after flames proceeded from the vicinity of the house he had just abandoned; but he did not allow annoying conjectures long to engross his thoughts, while he kept a close watch on the silent figure by his side, chagrined and angered at her mood of persistent silence.

"I will never break her proud spirit," he mused; "and I dare not force her to become my wife in reality, as in name. Let it pass. The fortune shall be mine, and then she can return to her lover, if she wishes."

The carriage finally stopped. Revere had selected a secure residence for his professed wife. It was in a retired portion of the city, and was located at the very terminus of a quiet side street hemmed in by residences on all sides.

He dismissed the carriage and led Constance into the building and to an apartment which was already lighted and well furnished, on the second floor. Evidently it was a place with which he was familiar.

"This is your apartment," he said; "and here I calculate you will be safe from the interference of your so-called friends. I give you two days to decide to publicly acknowledge myself as your husband or to lend yourself to my plans to obtain the stolen casket. If you are still obstinate at the end of that time, force will accomplish what fair means have failed to effect. As to escape, I warn you that every outlet from this house is carefully guarded by trusty friends."

She did not deign a reply as Revere left the room, locking the door after him. Her thoughts were anguished ones as she recalled the possible fate of Robert Marvin, but her wearied mind and body soon sunk into slumber, and she slept profoundly.

Revere's plans had been fully decided upon by that individual. He had no doubt now but that Robert Marvin and his son were aware of the existence of the casket, was even inclined to believe that the old lawyer had deposited it with some person for Constance. He knew that threats would never win the secret from the lawyer, and hoped through his son to effect the compromise of giving up Constance and securing the coveted fortune.

Completely at fault in his ideas, and coolly considering the death of Robert Marvin as no barrier to the discovery of the casket—ignoring any suspicion that he and his son were not acting in harmony since the escape of the former—he had determined to quietly remain in covert for a day or two and act through his agents.

He was somewhat worried concerning Torrance. Within the very house where he now was were the two men who had accompanied him to Morris, and they had found no trace of their leader. But about noon Revere was surprised by a visit from the man he had deputized to dispose of Robert Marvin.

He listened in bewilderment to the statement of the man concerning the explosion, and his dismay was real when the story of Marvin's rescue was told him and the subsequent visit of the man to the home of the detective, for Revere decided that Robert Marvin had been rescued, and that, too, by his son, the Telegraph Detective.

"I promised you a certain amount to dispose of my prisoner at the mansion. I will

double the reward if you will learn for me the exact condition of the patient, the name of the attending physician and that of the nurse, and the hours and habits of the young man who rescued the prisoner under the guise of a tramp."

The man started on the quest, and Revere was left alone, considering the complications of the case, until late in the evening, when one of his men came to the room.

"Torrance has come," he announced.

"Send him here," he ordered, excitedly.

The leader of the Dynamite League soon made his appearance. He was pale, exhausted, and his apparel disordered. He flung himself into a chair with a sigh of relief and replied to Revere's inquiring looks with the words:

"I have had a run for it."

"You have just returned to the city?"

"Yes, after delaying an hour to get my handcuffs cut off by an obliging locksmith," and Torrance proceeded to give an exact account of his various adventures. The recital was listened to with rapt interest by his companion, who only interrupted him to explain how circumstances within his own knowledge concurred with the story of his confederate.

Then, over their liquor and cigars the two men canvassed the case they were involved in, and were interrupted, finally, by the re-appearance of the man Revere had sent to spy on the home of the detective.

"Well?" Revere asked, as the man seated himself.

"I have found out what you desire."

"What is it?"

"First, the tramp is the Telegraph Detective disguised."

"I suspected that."

"Next, the patient is his father, formerly your prisoner."

"That I also knew. What is his condition?"

"Raving mad when he first got home, but quiet enough now. The doctor says he will regain his senses in a day or two, perhaps sooner."

"What is the physician's name?" inquired Revere.

"Winston."

"When does he call?"

"Morning and evening."

"And the nurse?"

"Is a rough fellow, named Brown, as strong as he is honest."

"And the detective?"

"Goes and comes at all hours."

"That will do. Stay in the house until I see you again," and Revere dismissed the man with an unceremonious wave of his hand, then turned to Torrance:

"You understand the case now?" he asked.

"Perfectly."

"And our chance of success?"

"Was never better."

"You mean—"

"That I see a way to find this casket if its whereabouts is known to the Marvins. Bring me pen, ink and paper," he ordered abruptly.

Revere pointed to the desk in the corner. In a few minutes Torrance had written his orders.

"These two notes," he then announced, "are the essence of a plan to carry out my scheme. The first is directed to Willis Marvin, the other to the nurse in charge of his father—the man Brown. Read them."

He handed them to Revere, who perused them eagerly. The one directed to Willis Marvin was written in a feminine hand and ran:

"MR. MARVIN:—"

"I write for Miss Constance Thorndyke in a great hurry. She has been taken to the place I name. Hasten there with the police, or alone, at once."

"MARY REYNOLDS."

The other was directed to Brown, in a larger handwriting, and bore the signature, Doctor Winston.

"Brown," it read, "I send a nurse to relieve you. Come to the direction below at once. I am waiting for you."

And beneath both notes was written a locality several miles from the business center of the city.

"I think I see your game," said Revere.

"But not entirely," laughed Torrance.

"All I ask is the co-operation of one man and a disguise. Clear the room of Marvin

first, Brown next, decoy them away long enough for me to search the room of the detective, or to talk with Robert Marvin in my new character, I'll guarantee to find out the whereabouts of this mysterious casket."

"I'll supply the disguise," and Revere turned to leave the room. "When will you carry your idea into effect?"

"Early to-morrow morning. Let this man of yours, who was just here, be ready to help me, and we'll start before daylight."

"Very well," and Revere left the apartment, and, soon after, by a secret side passage, the house.

After visiting a second-hand dealer's, and obtaining a part of the disguise he wished, he started to return. The hour was late, but there were no persons on the street whom he noticed, until, a few squares from the house where Constance was, a woman came around the corner, paused, caught him by the arm, as she cried:

"Adrian Revere!"

He started back in alarm.

"Arminie Royale!" was all he could say.

CHAPTER XXII.

JUST TOO LATE.

DESPITE his alarm at thus unexpectedly meeting the woman he had so wronged, Adrian Revere stood his ground, the ugly nature of the man written in the hard expression of his face.

"Yes, Arminie Royale, your wife," replied the woman. "You did not expect to meet me again so soon?"

He turned his evil eyes upon her.

"What do you want with me?" he demanded.

"Justice—revenge! Oh, you need not scan the streets. I do not propose to call the police or alarm the city. I simply intend to follow you, to go where you go, to wring a confession of the truth from your lips, an acknowledgment that I am your wife, and then—"

"Well, what then? Come, I've no time to trifle."

"Then," replied the woman, "I will consider the best way to punish a man who attempts to murder a true and faithful wife."

He recoiled at her words. She had the advantage of him, and he knew it. He did not dare attempt to conciliate her and lead her to his new place of residence, of which she was in ignorance, but the section of the city in which it was located she had evidently learned; nor could he afford an open quarrel. He attempted to mollify her.

"See here, Arminie," he said, in more gentle tones; "let us be friends. In a few days I shall be rich. Give me your address, and I agree soon to rid myself of Constance Thorndyke and fly with you to Europe with the fortune she will bring me."

A derisive laugh broke from his companion's lips.

"A pleasant fiction truly," she answered, mockingly. "Fly with you! Adrian Revere, you little know my nature. Wife only in name to you, I hate you as I do my deadliest enemy. A woman may forgive unfaithfulness, but utter ingratitude never! My address is your address. I've found you, and I'll stick to you until I die. Not for your love, but to haunt you with the memory of your despicable treason to me, who even lent myself to your schemes to destroy the life and happiness of a pure, innocent girl—Heaven forgive me!"

"She is a dangerous woman," thought Revere. "I must get rid of her," but his hand seeking the knife in his bosom dropped again to his side as he realized that a public scene could not escape notice.

He determined on flight.

"I agree to send you the marriage-certificate if you will not annoy me to-night—" he began, seeking to temporize with her.

She laughed shrilly.

"Another lie. You have not got it. Oh, I read your scheme, Adrian Revere. To deceive me to fly with Constance Thorndyke and her fortune, but it will never be, never!"

He was roused to the highest pitch of angry resentment.

"Curse you!" he muttered. "I nearly finished you once. Beware of the second time!"

"You threaten me? Be careful, Adrian Revere, lest I denounce you where you

stand and have you arrested for murder now and here."

As she spoke she faced him, trembling with suppressed passion, her face the playground of contending emotions.

"You cannot go with me!" he declared, desperately. "To-night of all times."

"I will go."

He started to pass her, but she blocked his way.

"Curse you, take that, if you will persist!"

He pushed her so violently that she fell against the fence near which they were standing, and without waiting to see the result of his assault, he sprang across the street, darting down an alley, and disappeared within its darkness.

"Coward! murderer!" shrieked the woman, in an agony of passion, as she struggled to her feet. "I will follow you! I will drag you to the gallows for that blow!"

She started in his wake with the desperate resolve of a wronged woman, but a strong arm held her back.

As Arminie had turned the corner of the street where she had met Revere, a form which had been following her paused as if to await the result of the interview.

Coming forward at the moment of Revere's escape he caught her arm and turned her face toward him, to verify his suspicions.

"Let me go," she cried, wildly. "In Heaven's name do not detain me. Yonder man is my husband, and—"

"Not till you have answered me a few questions."

She started at the voice.

"Willis Marvin!" she cried. "Oh! man, quick, quick! Down yonder lane with me, and pursue the man who has just escaped me."

But the detective smiled scornfully at what he believed to be a ruse to escape him.

"You shall answer my questions," he replied. "I have found you, and you must tell me where your accomplice, Adrian Revere is."

The woman uttered a low cry as the moments flew, and she realized that the man he named had escaped.

"Why did you detain me? Oh, why did you not join me in following up that man, for that was Adrian Revere, and in losing his trail you have lost all trace of the woman you love, Constance Thorndyke!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE WRONGED WIFE'S ONE PURPOSE.

THE woman pointed to the alleyway down which Adrian Revere had disappeared.

"It is too late to think of following him now," he answered. "But what does this mean? You claim to be his wife, and yet—"

"What, with all your shrewdness, can you not imagine the truth yet? My words should bring you joy, for if I am Mrs. Adrian Revere, the woman you seek is not his wife, and never can be so long as I live."

"But the deception?"

"I will tell you all about that in due time. It is not difficult for a husband to induce a wife to aid him in securing proofs of a fraudulent marriage to gain a fortune, but when that husband repays the sacrifice by treachery and outrage, it is difficult to deceive the wife again."

Her eyes blazed as she spoke.

"Then you mean that you and this man are at war?" Marvin asked.

"At war?" replied the woman, wildly; "at deadly enmity! Oh, you need not think I am deceiving you. If my past actions have wronged you and those you love, I will yet atone for it by bringing Adrian Revere to justice. Your father—have you seen him—do you know his present whereabouts?"

So abrupt was the question that Marvin's suspicions were aroused. He had left the house with the intention of telegraphing to Dorsett that he could not leave the city, and to call in local assistance regarding his prisoners, when Arminie Royale attracted his attention, and he had followed her with the result now attained. Ignorant of the episodes subsequent to his wild ride on the runaway engine, he only saw in the woman's query a disposition to discover his secrets.

"My father," he replied. "Why do you ask?"

"Because I have a right to—because he saved my life and is my friend."

"Your friend?" replied Marvin, in wondering surprise.

"Yes, Willis Marvin; I do not blame you for suspecting me of treachery, for I have been an enemy to you in the past, but if your father were here, he would verify my words. Is he in the city—do you know where he is?"

"Yes," replied Marvin, hesitatingly.

"And you can lead me to him?"

"If I so desire."

"Will you do so?"

"Why should I do that?" he asked.

"Because between your father and myself is an arranged plan, and we should exchange views in order that Adrian Revere may not escape."

"You talk in enigmas."

"Then let me be plain. From the time that I decoyed you to the den of the Dynamite League until I had, by assuming Constance Thorndyke's identity, succeeded in securing for my unworthy husband proofs of his marriage to her, I was acting as his accomplice. But when, at Morris, he shamefully betrayed me into the hands of hired assassins to put me out of the way, that he alone might enjoy the fortune and love of Constance Thorndyke, I became a changed woman. I met your father," and briefly she related the incidents of her experience in the old cabin, her flight to the city, and her meeting with her husband, whose footsteps she had come to shadow.

Marvin's incredulity was compelled to give way. So fully did the story accord with the facts, that he was now eager to admit her as a confederate in the effort to hunt the villains down.

"I believe your story, and will lead you to my father. He may not recognize you, for he is suffering from a delirious fever; but your forlorn face tells me that you need rest."

"Rest!" and the woman laughed harshly. "I want no rest till my wrongs are avenged. But I will go with you, because I can aid you, and you can aid me, in the work we have to do."

"Will you answer me one question concerning Constance Thorndyke?" asked Marvin, as they proceeded on their way. "What claim has Adrian Revere on Constance?"

"None whatever."

"Then what is the mystery of the marriage?"

"When she was brought to the mansion in Irving Place she was under the influence of chloroform. The next morning Revere administered a drug, which, while it affected her mind, did not render her thoroughly insensible, but, subservient to his influence in her dazed condition, he led her to the parlor, dressed and veiled, where a reputable clergyman was in waiting. Whatever the secret potency of the drug, it certainly enabled him to carry out his plan fully, forcing Constance Thorndyke's mute obedience to his every injunction. She lifted her veil at his direction, and the clergyman and those present saw her face. As the clergyman was getting ready to perform the ceremony, on an agreed plan, Revere took him into the front parlor for a conference, during which I led Constance into the extension room and there readily dressed myself exactly like her, which was easy to do, and then re-entering the second parlor alone, still enveloped in the veil, I personated her in the ceremony, all present believing me to be Constance Thorndyke."

The detective's face betrayed the profoundest amazement and indignation at the baseness of the whole transaction.

"But why did he not force Constance to the marriage? If she was under this influence, why not have her submit to the ceremony?"

Arminie Royale laughed derisively.

"Do you imagine I, his legal wife, would have allowed it? No, no, Willis Marvin; I was willing to lend myself to a scheme to secure him the fortune, but not to place another wife in my rightful place. He agreed to treat the girl with perfect kindness, personally, but, by the fraudulent claims of marriage to secure the casket and then abandon her. You see how, later, he abused my confidence and attempted the atrocious double crime of murder and wrong."

They had reached the building where Marvin's room was located, and the detective

led his companion up the stairs and into the apartment where his father lay. The nurse, Brown, made a quick gesture to Marvin, his face pleased and excited, and the latter came forward with an expectant look.

"What is it?" he asked.

"See!" and the nurse pointed to the patient sleeping quietly on the little cot.

There was such a change of expression on the silent face, such a calm, peaceful look that Marvin's features flushed with joy and gratitude.

"He is better, then?" he inquired, anxiously.

"Oh, much better. He awoke once, looked around, and asked where he was, and when I briefly told him that he was under your care, he smiled peacefully and fell into a gentle slumber. He'll wake weak and fevered, but his mind has returned, sir; you can hope for that blessing, at least."

Even as he spoke the patient moved slightly and his lips framed a word:

"Willis!"

It was the first time for many long weary months that the son had heard that name spoken by his father's lips. His soul was stirred to its intensest emotion; he forgot that the utterance was a sleeper's fantasy, and knelt by the couch after throwing aside his disguise.

"Father!" he answered, watching the pale, care-worn face.

The word startled and awakened the sleeper. He opened his eyes. For a moment they stared strangely around, then, falling on the anxious face of his son, their wildness faded to a happy, joyous smile.

"My son! Oh, have we met at last?"

His voice was painfully weak; his hands trembled as they clasped those of his boy, and his eyes were filled with tears.

Arminie Royale stood watching the scene with a sympathetic face. She advanced as, the rapture of emotion subsiding, the detective arose.

"Mr. Marvin."

The patient turned his glance toward her. For a moment he studied her face and apparel, and seemed lost in an effort to remember where he had seen her before.

"Oh, yes; I remember you now," he said, finally—"the woman of the river. How came you here?"

At a significant glance from the nurse, Marvin approached his father.

"You must not excite yourself by any questions now, father," he ordered gently. "Sleep and rest, and you shall know all afterward. It's all just right."

The patient closed his eyes with a satisfied smile, and Willis, beckoning to Arminie, led her into the small adjoining apartment.

"You notice that my father is scarcely in a condition to talk with you," he observed. "There is a lounge yonder, and I will abandon this apartment for your use. Your weary face tells me that sleep will strengthen you, to better act in the drama we now have to carry out together."

The woman thanked him, and accepted his hospitality by sinking to the couch, with a sigh of fatigue and mental exhaustion.

Marvin closed the door and joined the nurse.

"I will watch by my father for the remainder of the night," he announced.

"All right, sir. I'll snatch a few minutes' sleep, then," and Brown stretched himself on a comforter thrown in one corner of the room, while the detective lowering the lamp, took his post of vigilance by his father's bedside.

His mind was busy contemplating the case upon which he was engaged. At no time since the inception of his undertaking to right the wrongs of Constance Thorndyke had the affair seemed so certain of a successful consummation. He held a thorough knowledge now of all the secrets of Adrian Revere, and if he could but rescue Constance and arrest Revere and his men, the case would be complete.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SECRET OUT.

RESOLVING with the morning—now that his father had partially recovered from his delirium—to set actively about working the affair, Willis Marvin dozed lightly, and the morning had dawned ere he realized that his vigilance was past. All was silent in both

apartments, the weary Frenchwoman probably wrapped in the slumber of exhaustion, his father sleeping quietly, the nurse snoring industriously on his hard couch. Just then Marvin started and bent his ear to listen as he heard the sound of footsteps on the stairs without.

There was a quick but low knock on the door, and as he opened it a messenger-boy, holding a note in his hand, stood before him.

"Mr. Willis Marvin?"

"Yes. What is it?"

"A letter, sir."

The boy disappeared as Marvin took the note to the light to examine it. In his curiosity and eagerness he did not think to detain the boy, and when he had perused the missive he started after the lad to question him, but the messenger had disappeared.

Then Willis sat down to again read the note. At first he did not question it, but as he examined more thoroughly his suspicions were excited.

First, it was *not* the handwriting of Constance; next, her knowledge of his new location was apparently inexplicable. Was it some plot to entice him into the power of his enemies? He smiled grimly as he felt of his trusty revolver. Was it a scheme to decoy him away from his father's side so that Robert Marvin might again be brought within the power of his foes? Evidently not, for if his enemies were on the watch, they had had abundant opportunity for this during his previous absence from the house.

"Despite its mystery there's something in it," murmured the detective. "Stranger things have happened in my career. Constance may have learned my residence from her captors, and the note may be genuine. As to my father, Brown is here, and he will be watchful and powerful to resist an attack on the part of a stranger to enter the place forcibly."

He awoke the nurse unceremoniously.

"I am going away for a short time," he announced.

"Very well, sir."

"Keep a close watch of my father and do not admit *any* strangers," he ordered. "As to the woman in yonder room, she will probably sleep till I return; if not, ask her to stay here till I come back."

No one seemed lurking in the vicinity as he examined the locality searchingly when leaving the house. It was just early daylight as he departed in the direction indicated by the note.

Five minutes later from the hallway of a building opposite two men emerged. One was Adams, the emissary of Adrian Revere, and his companion was dressed in the garb of a physician, wearing large glasses and a glossy silk hat.

"One gone," muttered the latter.

"And now for the other," responded his companion.

"Yes; you will wait here till I return, and give the signal if Marvin appears."

The other started across the street and entered the building where Marvin's rooms were located. A knock at the door brought the nurse in response to the summons.

"Is Mr. Brown in?" inquired Adams.

The nurse nodded affirmatively.

The other handed him the folded note.

"From Doctor Winston," he said.

The honest, unsuspicious nurse perused the letter with difficulty.

"He wants me, eh?" he said; "and you're to stay here till I come back."

"Yes."

"Very well. Be careful of the patient and give him the medicine on the table if he wakes."

The false doctor, whose lack of resemblance to a paid attendant Brown did not seem to notice, seated himself by the bedside of the patient, while the latter hurried from the place with a parting injunction as to the care of the patient.

"The coast is clear," murmured the new attendant as he heard Brown's footsteps dying away in the distance.

He arose cautiously with a glance at the sleeping man, and proceeded to examine the drawers in the bureau of the apartment.

His disappointed face told, however, that he had been unsuccessful in his quest. He had advanced to the door of the next apart-

ment, and turned the knob to enter, when there was a movement on the bed, and a low, weak voice uttered the single word:

"Willis!"

The false nurse came to the side of the patient quickly. In the darkened room he saw the hand of the sufferer extended, and he caught it gently in his own—an eager flash in his gleaming eyes behind the spectacles.

"I am very weak," spoke the pale lips, "and my eye-sight is so dim I can hardly see you. Constance—she is safe?"

"Yes."

The new attendant spoke in a whisper, and bent exceedingly low to catch his words.

"If I should die, Willis, there is the treasure casket."

The patient could not notice the excitement of the man who held his hand.

"I removed it to a place of safety after the murder of the banker," resumed Robert Marvin, in faint tones. "You must get it."

"Where?"

"When I left the city that night, I hurried to Jersey City and took a train to Paterson. South of the city and east of the falls, in a lonely line of rocks skirting the canal. You cannot miss it. Wandering near the highest rocks over the city, and in a direct line with the depot, is a large oak tree broken at the center. I hid the casket in a hollow of that tree, marking it with a deep cut in the shape of a cross."

It was out at last! The sufferer sunk back into the stupor of slumber again. The eyes of the false attendant glittered like two streaks of light.

"Success!" he muttered. "After all our scheming and peril, a clever trick has at last secured the coveted fortune of Gerald Thorndyke!"

He glided from the room, his face glowing with excitement, yet, scarcely had he disappeared through the doorway, when the half-opened door of the little apartment occupied by the detective's strange guest opened wide, and Arminie Royale, with a pale face and startled eyes, entered the main room.

"The secret out!" she murmured, hoarsely, "and Revere in possession of it! Robert Marvin is safe for the present, and I dare not delay."

Her trembling fingers adjusted her hat on her head, her feet traversed the corridor rapidly as she left the room. At the side entrance below she saw two forms disappear around the next corner. For a moment she reflected; then she started on a quick run toward the next street.

"If I can reach the ferry first I shall outwit these men! Courage and shrewdness, Arminie Royale, and you will yet balk these human fiends, Adrian Revere and his accomplice, the disguised Sidney Torrance!"

CHAPTER XXV.

A NOVEL RACE.

BROAD sunlight lay in golden wealth over the busy city when Willis Marvin returned, with hurrying feet, to his room. His face was anxious, his manner excited, for he had learned that the pretended note from Constance Thorndyke was a fraud, and that, for some purpose, he had been decoyed away from his father's side.

What the motive? When, after an hour's exhaustive search of the vicinity indicated by the letter, and he was led to believe that he had been sent on a fool's errand, he could assign but one reason for the deception—the efforts of the Dynamite League to again secure his father. It was with rapid footsteps, therefore, that he entered the building and hastened to the apartment where his father lay.

A mighty sigh of relief escaped his lips as he cast a quick glance at the bed. His father was safe, and his regular breathing told him that he slumbered profoundly.

A puzzled look came over his face as he reflected over the singular errand he had been sent on. Had a plot been laid to entrap him, and for some inexplicable reason had the conspirators failed to carry out their intentions? He started, as his eyes, sweeping the apartment, his thoughts were directed in a new channel. The disordered drawers of the bureau, and the absence of the nurse, Brown, startled him, and he advanced to the open door of the next apartment and glanced in.

Arminie Royale was gone!

And had he arrived at a solution of the mystery of the letter?

Arminie Royale was false! She had deceived him, and, watching her opportunity, had rifled the bureau to obtain some clue of the missing casket. That opportunity had come in the departure of Brown; but why had Brown left his charge when instructed to watch him carefully?

The answer was given a moment later when heavy, rapid footsteps sounded in the corridor without, and Brown, red and perspiring, and breathing heavily, burst into the apartment.

"You here, and all safe?" he gasped, as he glanced apprehensively from the detective to the sleeping patient.

"As you see," replied Marvin, gravely, "but you—what does this mean?"

"Mean?" cried Brown, excitedly. "Blame me, if I know, but I've had a pretty chase. Read that."

As he spoke, he handed Marvin the note, crumpled amid his excitement in his brawny fist, as if he had exhausted his rage on the innocent missive, and as he would doubtless have done on the sender, if he had him in his power.

"Well?" inquired the detective, after perusing the note.

"Well, Doctor Winston never sent for me, and the people at the number on that letter don't know him at all. I'd like to have the man who wrote that note in my power just this moment! He wouldn't play any more practical jokes on me!"

He related his story in detail to Marvin, a minute later. The detective saw that the ink and paper of both notes were similar, and decided at once that Arminie Royale and Revere had been acting in collusion, despite her story to him of her hatred for her husband.

The excited conversation of Marvin and Brown awoke the sleeping patient. The detective approached him as his eyes opened.

"Father," he said, "you feel better?"

"Yes, my head is clear, but I am still very weak. Did you go?"

"Go where?" in some surprise.

"To the rocks. The treasure, you know. It's better to put it in some bank safely—"

A cry of amazement escaped Marvin, mingled with a dim suspicion of the truth.

"Speak, father!" he cried, excitedly; "what do you mean?"

"The treasure; you know I told you to go and get it, at Paterson, near the canal—"

The detective's face grew ashen in its hue.

"Father, you told me nothing of the treasure."

The patient's mild eyes expressed a quick surprise.

"Did not tell you, my son?" he repeated; "you cannot have forgotten—an hour since, perhaps more, when I called you to my side and you took my hand."

A groan was suppressed on Marvin's lips.

"Oh, I see it all," he cried, despairingly. "Those fiends have carried out their plans successfully and all is lost. They decoyed both of us away, and, directed by the woman, have imposed on my father, he believing some one of them myself."

In a whirl of anxious excitement, he made his father tell him all concerning the treasure-casket. Then, calculating the time which had elapsed since the woman had left, he hurried to the door.

"Brown," he said, quickly, "remain close by my father, and do not be induced under any circumstances to leave his side."

"Do not fear, sir," replied the attendant, grimly. "I won't be fooled a second time."

Marvin tore down the stairs at a leap. He staggered back as he fell against a form on the lower landing.

"Marvin!"

"Dorsett!"

It was his friend, the detective.

"In mercy's name where are you rushing to?" inquired the latter.

"Quick! Come with me!"

"Where?"

"To the Erie depot. There is not a moment to lose."

He seized Dorsett's arm, and the latter, deciding from his excited manner that something important was impending, did not delay him with idle questions; but, as they hurried toward the ferry, the Telegraph De-

tective briefly related the occurrences of the past few hours.

The information imparted made Dorsett almost as excited as himself, and once in Jersey City he was as anxious as Marvin in his inquiries regarding the departure of the last train.

"It's just gone," said a station-hand in reply to his question, pointing to the end of a train a hundred yards distant.

A groan of dismay escaped Marvin's lips, as he dashed after the disappearing train, Dorsett at his heels.

They abandoned their wild venture as they saw the locomotive gaining on them each moment.

"What shall we do?" cried Marvin, in an agony of anxiety. "My father was very explicit in his directions, and these men will not lose a moment of time in securing the casket after reaching Paterson."

His companion glanced searchingly around him.

A low cry escaped him as he caught sight of a light hand-car standing a few feet from the track.

"An idea, Marvin!" he cried: "but it's a wild one."

"What is it?"

"The hand-car yonder—the track will be clear of the train, and—"

He did not complete the sentence. Marvin understood him at once, and the vital issues at stake caused him to exercise no delay in carrying into execution even that vague plan to anticipate his enemies.

They lifted the car on the track and leaped aboard just as a watchman hastily approached them.

"What are you doing?" he demanded.

In reply Marvin exhibited his badge of authority.

"We are in pursuit of a criminal," he explained, hurriedly, "and must press this car into service."

"Oh, that's all right then; only put up a red flag on the end there, and the trackmen won't stop you."

Dorsett adjusted the red flag as Marvin worked the car. Together they then applied all their energy to the "brakes," and sped along the rails at a rapid rate.

Through the city, past its purlieus, and onward toward the proposed destination, the little car dashed. Rapid as was its rate, the train ahead was out of sight, and as their eyes met, both felt that they would arrive at Paterson too late to intercept the men they were in search of. They felt assured that, whoever had obtained the secret from Robert Marvin, concerning the treasure casket, would not delay in proceeding to the spot at once, and they also knew that the Erie freight train was the earliest one from New York for Paterson.

"We shall be too late," said Marvin, gloomily. "Oh!" he cried, with sudden desperation, as his eyes rested on the telegraph lines by the side of the road, "why did we not stop to think?"

"What do you mean?" inquired Dorsett.

"The telegraph!"

They had reached a desolate portion of the road, away from any side station, and Dorsett noticed the fact. He dropped the handle of the brake and consulted his watch.

"The train is due at Paterson in ten minutes," he said. "I have a plan. Stop the car."

"And lose precious time?"

"Do as I say. We will yet outwit them."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

THE car had come to a stop, and Marvin leaped to the ground and glanced searchingly up at the net-work of wires overhead.

"There is no time to lose," he said, excitedly. "The top is the original local wire. Hurry up the pole and cut the wire and drop it to me."

Dorsett stared a moment at his comrade, then clasped the nearest telegraph pole with his strong arms and began a practiced ascent of the post.

He took his heavy knife from his pocket, and soon severed the strand of wire the top cross-tree bore, and the ends came jangling down to the ground.

"If the current is only open," murmured

Marvin, his heart beating wildly with excitement and suspense as he seized the loosened wire.

He carried it to the side of the track where the ground was free from gravel, and took the remote end between his finger and thumb, Dorsett watching him curiously.

Tapping the ground with the wire, thus opening and closing the electric circle much in the manner that it is opened and closed by means of the operator's sounding key in the office, the detective first thought that in establishing a circuit he had opened communication with the Paterson office, which he signaled, if the line was open at that point. Slowly, steadily, he sounded the call which represents the telegraph letters in the word help.

"Click—click—click—click, click, click, click—click—click."

The unusual call would attract the attention of the operator, if he had heard it, which Marvin had no means of ascertaining. Then, in rapid movements he sent word to detain at the station all passengers unknown to the operator, from the early train at Paterson.

Repeating the message, and calling to Dorsett to descend while he handed him the severed wire to re-adjust, he watched the latter until he had accomplished his task, and then, as he descended to the ground, hurried him to the hand-car and they continued their journey.

They did not falter in their violent exertion until the car glided up to the platform of the station at Paterson.

Marvin sprung from the car and hurried to the side of the operator who, staring at him in momentary wonder, could scarcely answer his questions.

"You received a telegraph message about the passengers on the early train?"

"Yes."

"In time?"

"Yes. I communicated its import to the station policeman. There were six strange passengers—five of them men and one a woman. He politely intimated to them that they must consent to remain in custody for a short time, and they as politely assented, under the circumstances. They are in yonder room," and the man pointed to a door where a uniformed officer was guarding the entrance.

"The sixth was a woman, you say?" broke in Dorsett. "Did you detain her, also?"

"No; we did not like to do so, and she alighted after the others."

Dorsett said nothing, but he muttered between his teeth:

"If it was Arminie Royale, our efforts may have been fruitless!"

Marvin had gone to the officer and explained his business. The policeman opened the door, and the detective passed in quickly.

"I thought you had five," he said. "There are only three in here, and none of them our men."

The officer started, and verified the statement by glancing about the apartment.

"Where are the other two?" he asked of the trio.

One of them pointed to an open window.

"Why did you not stop them?" inquired the officer, angrily.

"It was none of our business," replied the foremost of the party. "Can we go?"

"Yes."

Marvin turned to Dorsett.

"Quick!" he said. "Let us hasten to the canal; we may not be too late yet."

"They have only a few minutes' start of us," replied Dorsett, as he hurried off with his companion.

Down the principal street, a wild run to the canal, and just as after crossing it they glanced up the deserted hillside, they uttered an ejaculation of surprise and satisfaction as they saw the forms of two men slightly in advance.

They had gained on them considerably, and had reached the summit of the range of hills, when they observed that both had discovered them, and, turning, had faced them.

The next moment both broke into a run. Marvin observed that one of them was attired in the pretended doctor's disguise described by Brown.

"He is Torrance's size," he murmured;

"it must be he. The other has the manner of the gardener at the Irving Place house."

They were now but a few yards from the spot described by Robert Marvin. The disguised Torrance had spoken a quick word to his companion, who had turned and leveled a revolver as Marvin approached.

Quick as light, Dorsett raised his weapon and fired. The man, with a loud cry of pain, sunk to the ground in the agony of death.

Torrance, fairly cornered and evidently abandoning all thoughts of the treasure, after the loss of his ally, rushed toward the edge of the cliff to get out of range.

By accident, or in the attempt to escape, he fell down the steep decline and passed over the edge. A horrified cry fell from Marvin's lips as he rushed to the edge of the cliff, and saw Torrance fall headlong from rock to rock down the steep declivity, and finally disappear in the deep basin of the canal, sheer two hundred feet below.

A moment later, however, he turned his attention to the matter of the treasure-casket.

"This is the spot, and yonder evidently the tree," he said, advancing toward a gigantic oak broken off at the top.

"Yes, here is the cross," said Dorsett, pointing to a disfiguration on the bark of the tree.

Eagerly the Telegraph Detective placed his hand in the hole in the trunk of the oak, his face glowing with anxious excitement.

His face grew white to the lips as he fell back with a cry of dismay and disappointment.

"What is it?" inquired the startled Dorsett.

No need to ask. As he gazed within the hollow, his face, too, became a picture of the wildest emotion—

For the casket was gone!

CHAPTER XXVII.

TRACKED.

THE face of Dorsett the detective was a reflection of that of his companion, as he gazed blankly at the empty receptacle of the casket. There seemed to be no doubt but that it had been removed, and that, too, recently, for there were marks on the bark of the tree around the aperture, which seemed to indicate that some heavy object had been dragged over its surface.

"It is gone!" murmured Marvin, in a hoarse whisper. "Who has taken it?"

Evidently neither of the two men who had met their fate in this lonely spot, for the detectives had traced them from the foot of the hill, and their object seemed to be the tree when first discovered.

Dorsett was the first to recover from the shock of the discovery.

"We are wasting precious time here," he declared. "We must be on the trail."

"Of whom?"

"Of the person who removed the casket and who must be somewhere in the vicinity."

"Then you think it was taken recently?"

"Within the past hour. Yes."

"Why do you think so?"

"From evidence here—from a clew I have discovered. The thief is a woman, and her name—"

"Arminie Royale?"

"You have guessed it," replied Dorsett, confidently. "The operator at the depot informed us that the sixth Paterson passenger on the early train was a woman. She was not detained, and she doubtless preceded us here about an hour, and I am certain that woman is the person you have named—Arminie Royale."

"Then she was in league with these men."

"Not necessarily. I believe she was in earnest when she met me at Morris, and I believe, furthermore, Torrance escaped from her there and was not liberated by her. But I also believe she has turned her knowledge of the hiding-place of the treasure to her own account—whether to finally turn it over to Revere, in a compromise, or to retain it herself, it is impossible to surmise as yet."

Both men felt, however, that they were wasting time searching for the woman. She had the start of them, and with a hundred natural hiding-places in the vicinity and a network of railways within ten miles of the place, they had but faint hopes of finding her.

They scoured the neighborhood very thor-

oughly, but finally abandoned the quest as useless and returned to the scene of the tragedy, where two of the most desperate, active members of the Dynamite League had met their fate.

Adams was dead, and the body of Torrance had evidently found a watery grave. Repairing to the police office in Paterson, Marvin notified the chief of police of the tragedy. A squad of officers was dispatched to the scene, recovered the body of Torrance, and with that of Adams was conveyed to the morgue.

It was nightfall when the two detectives, somewhat discouraged and wearied from their long and arduous labors, returned to New York city. Dorsett accompanied Marvin to his apartments, where they found Brown in charge of the patient—the latter much improved since morning.

"Has any one been here since I left?" inquired Marvin of Brown.

"No one but the doctor, sir," replied the nurse.

Robert Marvin looked anxiously at the grave face of his son, and his first inquiry was concerning the casket. By Dorsett's advice he related the story of the quest, and although the recital excited the patient very much, it also sharpened his intelligence to a thorough consideration of the case.

He was strong enough now to tell all that had occurred to him since the day he had gained access to the room of Gerald Thorndyke. He had made a new will for the latter, and had removed the casket to the hands of a trusty friend—Hiram Arnold, the murdered banker. That very night he had been kidnapped by three men, forced into a carriage, and had been held a prisoner in the cellar of the Irving Place house for a week or more. Later, Torrance had taken him in charge, and he had been held by him and his life threatened because he would not reveal the whereabouts of the casket.

The night of the murder he had secured quarters in the house where his son had seen him disappear. He had arrived too late at the banker's to prevent the murder, but had secured the casket. Pursued by the police, fearing arrest, on a false charge, and the wresting of the jewels from his hands, he had hastened to Paterson, secured them in the tree, and then set about watching the mansion where Adrian Revere was. He had entered the library, secured Arminie's marriage-certificate, sent the note to Constance—being slightly injured in falling from the trellis—and later, had traced Torrance to Morris. The remainder the detectives knew from the part they themselves had taken in subsequent developments of the case.

An interested trio, with interests mutual and unselfish, they saw, even after all their endeavors, formidable obstacles to eventual success in their path. They had no certain knowledge that Arminie Royale had the treasure casket—they only suspected that fact. Their first move must be to find her, and even then her shrewd pertinacity might refuse to return the stolen jewels.

Furthermore, Adrian Revere must be tracked to his covert—arrested at all hazards, and Constance Thorndyke rescued. The objects to be attained were clearly defined, but there was not one tangible clew leading to the whereabouts of these people.

They finally, however, decided on a definite course of action. Dorsett was to keep a close watch over the locality of the Irving Place house, in the hope that some of the servants might visit the place, and he could trace them to Revere's new residence; while Marvin, leaving his father in charge of Brown, started out on a vague search for Arminie or Revere, scarcely hoping to stumble over either of them.

It was after a long and weary tramp that he finally reached the same spot where he had met Arminie Royale the night before. As he stood there, lost in meditation, it struck him that in all probability the neighborhood held the object of his search in one particular—Adrian Revere. So long did he remain there that he did not notice time go by, until, as a carriage dashed around the corner, his curiosity and attention were attracted by the view of a man clinging to the hind axle of the vehicle.

He could not mistake that form. As the light from a street lamp flashed across the carriage gear it revealed a familiar face to

him—that of his friend and associate detective, Dorsett.

He hastened along the pavement at a rapid walk in the direction the carriage had taken, and broke into a keen run as it whirled around the corner of the next street. He caught sight of it again a minute later, taking its second turn, and dodging behind a tree as it halted in front of a house, he beheld its occupant, a woman, step out and hasten up the steps of the place, and disappear within the open doorway.

The man clinging to the axle did not move until the carriage had proceeded to a side lane and entered it, when he quietly returned to the street, and then stole along in the shadow of the house until he reached an area near by.

Marvin, intensely excited, joined him there a moment later.

"You?" ejaculated Dorsett, in surprise.

"Yes. You have traced our game?"

"Man and woman both," replied Dorsett, confidently.

"Who was the woman in the carriage?"

"Arminie Royale."

Marvin uttered an exclamation of delight. "And how did you come to find her?"

"Simply enough. I secreted myself in the stables of the burned residence on Irving Place, and waited. I saw that the horses and carriage were still there, and was not surprised when in a short time a man came to the place and proceeded to hitch up the horses. He was just ready to leave the stable when a form suddenly glided in at the doorway."

"The Frenchwoman?"

"Yes; it was Arminie Royale. She recognized the man as Revere's driver, and insisted that he should take her to his master. He seemed to be in doubt, but a gold coin from the woman overcame his hesitation, and he agreed to take her to his employer. I tackled on behind the carriage, and here I am."

"And you think Revere is in that house?"

"I do for a certainty."

"And Constance, perhaps?"

"In all probability. There is a court at the side. Let us investigate."

Together they reconnoitered the building, the same where Revere had confined Constance Thorndyke the previous night.

The court was stone-paved, and allowed of only one entrance thence to the house—an open arched doorway, through which the two detectives proceeded. Adrian Revere evidently relied more on the retired location of the building for safety than on its security from intrusion by a person familiar with his secrets.

They had gained a little hallway and Marvin was proceeding along in the darkness when Dorsett drew him aside.

At a turn in the corridor a glass door had come into view and through it shone a light from an interior apartment.

Seated at a desk, his face pale and troubled, was a man, while opposite him, with wildly-gleaming eyes and clinched hands was a woman who had evidently just entered the apartment.

The detectives stood, watchful and silent, interested spectators of the scene as they recognized the two, for the woman was Arminie Royale, and the man was the object of their search, the real leader of the Dynamite League!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CLOSING IN.

OF the success or failure of the schemes of Sidney Torrance, to secure the casket through the co-operation of Adams, Adrian Revere knew nothing after these two had left the house early on the morning succeeding the reappearance of the leader of the Dynamite League.

He had passed a sleepless night, not only from anxiety regarding his encounter with Arminie Royale, but from a ceaseless worry over the main complications of the case in which he was interested. To him but one means of escape seemed open—the immediate securing of the treasure-casket and flight, with or without Constance Thorndyke.

He had no intention, however, of restoring the imprisoned maiden to her friends so long as he could hold her as a hostage for his own safety. He made his passion subservient to his avarice, and staked all on obtaining the coveted fortune; and remembering Tor-

rance's confident words, he resolved to keep in retirement until he heard from his accomplice. To venture forth and run the risk of meeting Arminie Royale would be rash indeed, for knowing the woman's fiery disposition, he was in doubt as to whether she had not already betrayed his secrets to the police.

It was late in the afternoon when one of the League, whom he had sent out to keep track of the movements of certain persons—Torrance and others of the confederation of crime—returned and sought a private interview with his leader.

Revere read in his face that something of importance had occurred, and he hastened to ask:

"What is it?"

"Important news."

"Concerning Torrance?"

"Yes; he is dead."

Revere sunk back in his chair as though struck a violent blow.

"Dead?" he repeated.

"Yes; and Adams too!"

The ashen lips of the outlaw leader could only grasp the words:

"There must be some mistake."

"There is none. I learned the intelligence at police head-quarters."

"How did it occur?"

"In a collision with Marvin and Dorsett, the detectives."

"Where?"

"At Paterson."

Revere started. His quick mind readily conceived that if the episode had occurred there it must have been when the men were in quest of the hidden treasure-casket.

His informant was unable to give him any further particulars, and he sat moodily restless, haunted with dire apprehension for the future, as he realized that two of his most trusty colleagues had been removed from co-operating in his evil schemes.

"The game is closing in on me," he muttered, "and I am utterly in the dark as to the movements of my enemies. There is but one resource left—flight."

He summoned the driver who had met Arminie Royale in the stable of the Thorndyke mansion, and ordered him to proceed thither cautiously, and bring the carriage to his present place of residence. Then he ascended to the room where Constance was a prisoner.

Her confinement had made her thin and pale, but she regarded him with her ordinary dignity of manner as he entered the apartment.

"I wish you to prepare for a long journey," he said, sullenly; "I am going to take you away from here."

She made no reply to his words.

"You have refused to acknowledge me as your husband," he went on. "Well and good. I cancel the marriage contract, but I am too deep in the mire to extricate myself without your help. There is no need of deception between us. I have come to a point where your death would bring me the wealth I crave. I do not claim the sacrifice. I only ask that you quietly accompany me hence, and I promise to return you safely to your friends when I myself am free from pursuit. Do you agree?"

"No," she replied, finally. "I cannot trust you. I agree to nothing in common with you; I am in your power, but beware how you seek to injure me, for my wrongs will be terribly avenged."

His troubled features told her that her words were not without effect.

"I am telling you the truth," he persisted. "Within a half-hour the carriage will be ready to convey you hence. On the journey, utter one word to attract attention and I will kill you. I swear it."

She shuddered at his words, and uttered a sigh of relief as he left the apartment. He had, however, aroused her to the highest pitch of anxiety, for with the intimation of a new removal came the fear that she might be taken from the city, where, free from the influences now surrounding him, her cruel captor would not hesitate to persecute her and trade on his possession of her with her friends.

She had viewed her surroundings from the windows more than once, but she saw no means of escape from her prison. It was only a leap to the ground, but she shrunk

from that terrible jump down a blank, unbroken wall to a stone pavement below. Across the court was the dead wall of the adjoining building, the court probably belonging to the house in which she was confined.

She had given up all thought of escape by any other means than a wild spring to the ground, but as she saw a man pass below and go into the adjoining yard, carrying a bundle of roof-slates, and evidently a workman, her eyes brightened as she went to the little table in one corner of the room, selected a book lying there, and tore out a blank leaf, and with the tiny pencil on her chain indited a note to the police, informing them that she was a prisoner held by a villain, and requesting them to follow the bearer to the house where she was incarcerated. Folding it, she directed it to the chief of police, and taking a gold coin from her pocket, approached the window.

It was two hours later when the man started from the adjoining house to leave his work for the night. She could see by his loose blouse and general appearance that he was a workingman, and as she perceived no one in the vicinity she opened one side of the shutter and dropped the coin.

It fell rattling at his feet. He stooped, picked it up and glanced up in surprise.

He did not misunderstand the uplifted finger placed warningly on her lips, but as the fluttering letter fell into his outstretched hands, nodded intelligently as though he understood what was required, and passed out of sight, leaving Constance a prey to the keenest emotions of suspense and hopefulness.

"If he only understands it and takes it to the chief of police!" she murmured.

Alas for her hopes! The money so easily earned was a fateful boon to the laborer. He repaired to the first saloon he came to, and, having ascertained the direction of the letter, started for the City Hall; but the money in his pocket was too great a temptation to his bibulous desires. From one groggery to another he wandered, and it was late in the night when he staggered into police head-quarters with just sense enough to deliver the letter.

A lieutenant in charge read the note and questioned the man. The latter gave incoherent replies, but the circumstances of the case justified the officer in believing that some deep mystery lay beneath the letter, and securing the aid of some fellow-officers, he asked the messenger:

"Can you lead up to the place where you received this letter?"

The other nodded assentingly.

"Then do so;" and thus it was that personal and official efforts were, that night, to deal the last fell blow to the surviving members of the Dynamite League.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE HAND OF FIRE.

It was indeed the mismatched husband and wife seen through the glass door in the house they had been so singularly led to—that the two detectives, Marvin and Dorsett, saw.

All unconscious of the new plots forming about his head, having his utter destruction in view, Adrian Revere was far more bold with the woman he had so basely wronged than if he had been aware of the true state of affairs.

The first alarm at her unexpected appearance having passed, he only marveled how she had found him out. One glance at her dark, vengeful face told him that she had come to overwhelm him with reproaches, and it augured well for her being alone that she referred in her first words to the fact that she had been keen enough to secure the co-operation of his driver in bringing her hither.

"I am here, Adrian Revere," she said, "despite your endeavors to hide from me."

"I see you are," replied the man, with a sullen scowl. "What do you want?"

"You will know in time. First, where is Constance Thorndyke?"

"You question me as if you were mistress of this house," retorted Revere. "You forget that I am surrounded by my confederates, men who will not hesitate to do my bidding at my call."

"I forget nothing," replied the woman, her eyes gleaming balefully—"not even that

I have my hand on a revolver, which shall send a bullet to your traitorous heart if you dare to make a movement to carry out any such design."

Revere trembled at her threat.

"Constance Thorndyke is in the house," he said. "How does that benefit you?"

"I do not seek that it should," replied the woman. "I have ceased to think of myself except so far as I can avenge my wrongs on you. Oh, I have taken no such petty revenge as betraying you to the police. Your crimes will find you out yet, without my co-operation."

"In Heaven's name, what have you come here for, then?" demanded the man, goaded to desperation by her tantalizing manner.

"To torture you, as you have me!" replied the woman. "Adrian Revere, the hour is approaching when you will stand before the bar of justice. It is inevitable; you cannot escape it. And when you are there, my presence shall torment you; the knowledge shall come to you that, even at this last moment, one word from my lips could have saved you."

"You are trying to alarm me," with an attempt at an incredulous sneer.

"Am I?" her eyes flashing hatred and contempt upon him. "Wait and see! When the end has come you will know something more—the mystery of the treasure-casket."

The casket! Her words thrilled him. His mind awoke to a new light at her vague insinuation.

"Oh, I see you believe me. Did you not, I would prove to you that my revenge is no petty one. At one word I could bestow liberty, escape—the treasure-casket at your disposal!"

Was she in earnest? Over the man's mind came a quick inspiration to attempt to cajole the wronged wife—to induce her to speak more clearly. But he knew too well her deep nature to attempt it.

"You will but doom yourself to the jail if you drag me thither," he cried. "Consider that before you refuse to aid me. If my position is a perilous one, and you can obtain the treasure, remember my old love for you, and we may yet enjoy life in some distant clime."

"Your love!" cried the woman, scornfully. "I would not accept that insincere passion if laid at my feet. No, Adrian Revere, I have triumphed; I shall have my revenge, and—"

There was the sound of hurrying footsteps along the corridor. The next moment both occupants of the apartment were startled as the form of a man burst unceremoniously into the room.

"Fly!" he cried to Revere, his face pale, his manner apprehensive. "We are lost."

Revere started to his feet, his features as disturbed as those of the messenger.

"Speak," he cried. "What has happened?"

"The police. They are in the house! They have surrounded the place," replied the man, rapidly.

Revere, forgetting the woman, seized a revolver from the drawer of the secretary and placed it in his bosom.

"Where are the carriage and horses?" he asked the man.

"In the court."

"Is there no way in which we can get the girl, Constance, to the carriage, and evade the officers?"

"There may be. The rear of the house is unguarded, apparently."

"Then hasten to her room and force her to the carriage. Mass the men near the rear to cover my escape, and tell the driver to stop for nothing, once started."

"All right, sir," and the man disappeared to obey the injunctions of his master.

Revere started after him to hasten the preparations for flight.

"Hold!"

It was Arminie Revere who spoke.

He fell back as she presented the barrel of a glittering revolver at his breast. He discerned his peril and her resolution, and a blank look of despair came over his face.

"In Heaven's name, Arminie, let me pass."

The woman laughed derisively.

"To fly with Constance Thorndyke and leave me unrevenged! Not yet, Adrian Revere!"

"I swear I only seek her company to shield myself, to secure immunity from arrest," pleaded the man, frantically.

"It matters not. Your hour has come, and your base treachery to me shall not pass unpunished."

The man was goaded to the very verge of despair. He uttered a loud cry of reckless terror, and sprang upon the woman, knocking her to the floor, the revolver exploding harmlessly in her grasp.

"For liberty," he gasped, as he hastened to the door; but at that moment the glass door opened and two men confronted him, cutting off his escape.

Revere fell back, his face white as marble, his eyes wearing an expression similar to that of the hunted and captured beast of prey.

"Willis Marvin!" he cried, "the Telegraph Detective!"

"Yes, Adrian Revere. We have met at last, villain; but the tables have turned. Drop that revolver!"

The outlaw had raised his weapon, but it had swept the further corner of the apartment with its quick range; it was not aimed at the detective.

Ere he could pull the trigger, however, Arminie Royale, recovering herself, sprang before him, knocking it aside, and then pointed to a small paper near the secretary.

"He meant to strike that with a bullet and destroy us all," she cried.

"What is it?" asked Marvin.

"Dynamite!"

The villain's teeth ground beneath his pallid lips, his hands clinched tightly. Dorsett's eyes fixed on his every movement, Marvin guarding the doorway. Revere knew, as he heard loud sounds in the house, that the police had cut off every avenue of escape for himself and his accomplices.

He made one last, bold, defiant move.

"Am I to understand that I am under arrest?" he demanded of Dorsett.

"Yes."

"On what charge?"

"Murder!"

"A contemptuous smile crossed the face of Revere, as he realized that shrewdness and influence might yet overcome that charge, based on evidence scarcely tangible enough when met by a strong rebuttal; yet he shielded his gloved right hand in his bosom, with a quick look at Marvin.

"You will find it difficult to carry out your case," he said, with affected carelessness.

He started back as the Telegraph Detective made a quick spring to his side.

"No, Adrian Revere," he said, in thrilling tones; "my father's evidence alone would denounce you; but, more than that, the memento of your desperate deed, received in the library of the murdered man, Hiram Arnold, would convict you. Behold! the brand of guilt—the living evidence of your crime!"

He had wrested Revere's hand from his bosom, and with one deft movement had torn the glove from its place.

And as he did so, as Revere uttered a cry like the last despairing expression of a lost soul, plainly revealed to the sight of all was the disfigured hand, purpled with the phosphorescent paint in the banker's desk!

Thus the mystery of the hand of fire was made manifest!

CHAPTER XXX.

THE TIGER CAGED.

As a series of shots in the rear portion of the house indicated to Marvin that a collision between the men in the building and the police had taken place, the Telegraph Detective clasped a pair of handcuffs on the wrists of Revere so quickly that the latter did not realize what he was doing until his task was accomplished.

"He shall not escape amid the excitement and confusion," declared Marvin, resolutely.

The villain darted a look of hatred at his captor and rival, and the murderous gleam in his face became intensified as he heard the mocking laugh of Arminie Royale.

Dorsett drew a step nearer to his friend, and whispered a single word:

"Constance!"

The detective understood, and transferring the charge of his prisoner to his friend, Marvin hurried from the apartment.

The shots had subsided now, and as he reached the rear part of the old structure he discerned the reason. Within a large room four officers had carried half a dozen men, who, covered by their revolvers, crouched sullenly by the wall.

The lieutenant in charge of the men recognized Marvin with some surprise.

"You here?" he ejaculated.

"Yes. Have you secured all the men?"

"I think so; and have given the signal for help. When assistance arrives I will march them to the station. Do you understand the case?"

"Perfectly. These men are members of a most desperate confederation of criminals. But how came you here?"

The lieutenant related the episode of the note, and Marvin hastened from his side at thought of Constance.

He traversed the corridor of the place, trying this door and that, and calling the name of the maiden he sought. But his search proved unsuccessful until he reached a door which resisted his first efforts to open it. Bringing all his strength to bear he sent the whole door crashing from its hinges.

There was a light in the apartment. As its gleams fell on the face of a woman standing in an attitude of alarmed surprise in the middle of the apartment, the detective sprang forward, a cry of joy on his lips:

"Constance!"

She tottered where she stood, an unnatural pallor coming into her face.

"Willis Marvin!" she cried, "has the grave given up its dead?"

"The grave?" he repeated, as he caught her half-fainting form in his arms. "Constance—Constance, look up! It is I—Willis Marvin—here to protect you forever."

But she had swooned in his arms, the glimmering smile on her pale face telling Willis that her heart partook of the same wild joy which thrilled his own.

He forgot Revere—his accomplices—all, save that he was once more in the presence of the woman he loved. As he conveyed her to a couch, and knelt by her side, and solicitously tried to recall her to consciousness, her care-worn face seemed never so beautiful to his enraptured soul.

Her eyes, opening, swept his face with a startled glance; then the expression was subdued to an embarrassed one as she dropped her gaze, reading the ardent love his countenance betokened.

"Constance," he cried, fervently, "we have met again—the peril of our lives past, our enemies in the power of the law."

She looked up quickly.

"And Revere?" she asked, anxiously.

"Will persecute us no more. He is a prisoner. Come, are you strong enough to leave this place?"

"Anywhere with you!"

She clung to his sustaining arm, which thrilled at the contact of her confident clasp. As she realized how much the man had been to her when she thought him dead, the love-light of a lasting emotion beamed forth from the grateful, happy eyes.

He led her down the stairs to the library, passing the officers on the lower landing as they removed their prisoners to the police station, and startled Adrian Revere as he ushered her into his presence.

The villain cast a quick, sullen look at her beaming face, but he did not speak. Instead, he mutely obeyed Dorsett, as the latter touched his shoulder and pointed to the door.

Arminie Royale came forward as the door closed on the detective and his charge. Constance shrunk back with a cry of alarm, and clung close to Marvin for protection.

Arminie laughed bitterly.

"You have reason to hate and fear me," she said, "but you have also reason to thank me."

Marvin nodded reassuringly to Constance.

"She speaks truly," he said, in explanation to the inquiring glance of his companion.

"If I wronged you," continued the Frenchwoman, "it was because I loved Adrian Revere. That love, changed to hate by his ungratefulness and treachery, has led to my bringing about his arrest, for had I not in-

terfered, the police would have arrived too late to save you."

"We must leave this place," explained Marvin. "Will you accompany us?"

"Yes. I must see your father. Then, unless the law claims me, too, for my association with Adrian Revere, I must go."

"Where?"

"I know not. Anywhere to forget my misery and the treachery of the man I once loved."

The carriage Adrian Revere had destined to convey Constance Thorndyke away was employed to take her to Marvin's apartments. Arminie, silent and moody, accompanied them. When they reached the rooms of the detective they found Robert Marvin so fully recovered as to be dressed and sitting up.

He welcomed Constance warmly, but glanced dubiously at Arminie Royale.

She came boldly to his side.

"I can see by your looks that you distrust me," she said.

"I can hardly help it, considering—"

"Considering the way my actions look since you left me at Morris," interrupted the Frenchwoman rapidly. "But, all the same, I have not betrayed your confidence; circumstances compelled my movements and acts."

She had turned to leave the room.

"You are going?" asked the detective.

"For an hour or two, yes."

He gazed at her; she burst into an impatient laugh.

"Oh, do not fear that I will run away until I see my false husband punished for his crimes. I will return within two hours, with a surprise for you all."

"A surprise?" murmured Robert Marvin.

"Yes; then I shall claim a reward for my services."

He looked inquiringly at her.

"You mean—"

"I mean," replied the Frenchwoman, "the guerdon of my honor. The only evidence that I am an honest woman, and which Adrian Revere would, in his bitter hatred, withhold from me—my marriage-certificate."

The door closed on her form as she spoke. She did not hear the cry of dismay as Robert Marvin turned to his son and cried:

"The marriage-certificate? Poor Arminie! I have lost it!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

A CONSUMMATION COMPLETE.

WILLIS MARVIN looked curiously at his father as he spoke the words:

"I have lost it."

A thoughtful expression had come over the patient's face, and as Constance and Marvin regarded him silently, they could see that he was endeavoring to remember the mystery of the document alluded to.

Finally the father spoke:

"It is most singular. I had it with me when Adrian Revere cast me into the cellar of the house on Irving Place; but since then—"

"Is it not in your pockets now?" inquired the son.

"No; I searched them mechanically when I donned my clothing an hour since; only a small amount of money and a few unimportant papers are there."

"This woman seems to attach great importance to the certificate," remarked Willis.

"Yes; because she knows her villainous husband will delight in branding her as a nameless wife. It seems they were married in England somewhere, and the marriage-certificate lost. Arminie's character is in the balance."

"But she is his wife?"

"Undoubtedly; indeed, I know it, for I read the certificate."

"We must force Revere to do this woman justice at all hazards," declared the detective, determinedly. "Oh, I remember now," he added; "you say you had the certificate when thrown into the cellar?"

The patient bowed affirmatively.

"Then I believe I can solve the loss. When in your insane fury you felled me to the ground, you had placed a piece of paper in the powder. It must have been the marriage-certificate."

The elder Marvin started. His eyes betokened a gleam of quick intelligence as to the past.

"I can dimly remember it," he said. "It must be so."

They were interrupted by Dorsett, who came hurriedly into the apartment.

"You are all here safe?" he asked, a satisfied look in his face.

"As you see."

"And Arminie?"

"She has gone."

Dorsett's face was clouded in an instant.

"Gone!" he cried, in blank amazement.

"Were you wild to allow her to depart, when the secret of the casket is in her possession?"

The Telegraph Detective was now, in turn, alarmed.

"Fool that I was!" he cried. "Amid the excitement of other events I forgot all about it."

"Then it is lost!" declared Dorsett, in deep chagrin. "This keen-witted woman has outwitted us all. Evading arrest by sheer boldness, she will doubtless take the fortune with her to some foreign clime, for she acknowledged to Revere that she knew where it was."

"She will return," interrupted Robert Marvin, gravely.

"You believe it?"

"I am positive of it. I think we are injuring this woman whom circumstances have surrounded with so much apparent treachery to our cause."

"We will see," said Dorsett, incredulously.

Willis took him aside and briefly explained the matter of the destroyed marriage-certificate.

"And you wish to aid the girl to satisfy the world that she is Adrian Revere's wife?"

"Yes, just what I desire to do."

"Then to-night is the time to obtain the evidence."

"Why?"

"Adrian Revere is utterly demoralized. If the confessing process is to be applied, now is the time. I will take advantage of his weakness, and if the girl returns before I come again, detain her here at all hazards."

"Very well, so it shall be."

Dorsett left the apartment, and Constance, Willis Marvin and his father thought not of sleep; they were too excited for that; and as the eyes of Constance and the detective met, both knew that the deep love between them was all the more intense and unselfish, though unexpressed. After a while a knock on the door was answered by Brown, the attendant, who opened the door, to admit—Arminie Royale!

The elder Marvin's face brightened, as he said:

"I knew she would return."

The woman seemed to be concealing some object under her shawl. As she turned her face sorrowfully to the detective, she asked:

"You have not found the treasure-casket?"

"No."

"Then be it my task to prove my sincerity by returning it to you. It is here!"

She drew the precious receptacle of the Thorndyke treasure from beneath the shawl, and placed it on the table before Robert Marvin.

With eager eyes the old man examined it, while the detective, overcome at the honest sincerity of the Frenchwoman, could scarcely contain his emotion.

"Noble woman!" he cried, impassionedly; "your fidelity to an honest cause would insure its success!"

"Rather my oath to be avenged on a traitor has been kept to your benefit," replied Arminie, moodily. "Give me no thanks. Had I anything to live for, my conscience would not have troubled me if I had kept the casket."

The casket, as the elder Marvin revealed its glittering contents to the eyes of those about him, was indeed a treasure-box. No wonder that the avaricious soul of Adrian Revere had been tempted to crime to secure it! Representing a princely dowry poured out on the table, it made the rightful owner, Constance Thorndyke, an heiress indeed.

"My reward," said Arminie, finally, as she approached old Mr. Marvin.

The old man's face looked troubled, but his embarrassment was relieved as the door

again opened and Dorsett, the detective, entered the room.

"Your reward?" he said, taking up the words. "If by that you mean the acknowledgment of your marriage to Adrian Revere, it is here!" and he handed a folded paper to the Frenchwoman. "Adrian Revere, under the influence of terror, has confessed all. The marriage-certificate is lost, but that document will evidence your legal marriage to him; and as he gave me the address of the clergyman in England who performed the ceremony, you can secure more convincing proof if you desire."

Arminie, a satisfied look in her eyes, turned to go.

"You must not leave us," said Constance, disengaging her hand from the fond clasp of Willis. "If you have wronged me, you have also nobly atoned for that wrong, and your generous act in restoring the treasure-casket deserves some proper reward."

"I wish no reward," replied Arminie. "When I overheard Sidney Torrance secure the secret from Mr. Marvin, I resolved to anticipate him, and I did so. I but carried out my plan of revenge—I am satisfied."

"Your husband wishes to see you," said Dorsett. "I promised to tell you."

"I will go to him," decided Arminie, moodily. "Farewell!"

They knew it would be useless to detain her, but a sadness came over the little coterie as she departed, and they reflected on the sorrow her misdirected love had brought to her.

It was the last time they saw her. Later they heard that she had visited her husband twice. Evidently she had somewhat relented toward him, for he was found lying dead in his cell the morning succeeding her last visit—a victim to suicide by poison provided by her at his earnest solicitation!

As to the woman, it was said, in after years, that she had returned to her friends, and led a gloomy, secluded life in an humble home in the southern part of France.

The other members of the Dynamite League were all duly punished, and the last one being captured, the operations of the confederation were over forever. Robert Marvin readily explained his connection with the murder mystery of the banker, Hiram Arnold, and the Thorndyke fortune was at last settled on its rightful heiress.

When Willis Marvin and Constance Thorndyke were wedded, a new and more pretentious mansion was erected on the site of the old structure where Constance had experienced so much woe and so much happiness as well. The elder Marvin occupied a welcome corner in the new residence, and Dorsett was fully rewarded for his part in hunting down the powerful enemies of the persecuted girl.

Love reaching its fulfillment has awarded the faithful husband and wife all the peace and happiness which only those who know by contrast the vicissitudes of peril and despair can appreciate.

Amid the joy of blissful reunion they have almost forgotten to shudder over their terrible experience in the fateful past, but they never can be entirely without memory of its mysterious workings; and although Willis Marvin is no longer in the employ of the police, very often the account of some tragedy of great public interest causes him to think of the time when he was the Telegraph Detective, and when his patience and courage brought about the fate of the Dynamite League.

THE END.

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